Not This Life
by Tkeyla

Summary

This life was not what Steve had envisioned when he resigned from the Navy...

When Steve's demons threaten to take over his life, he is rescued by a stranger who propositions him in a bar. This leads him to a new way of life, one he'd never before considered. During his journey, he meets Danny who has his own demons to excise. Together, they find a place they both belong.

Notes

This story started when I signed up for Solicited Love: A Multi-Fandom Prostitution Fest on Live Journal. When the story reached 15,000 words, I decided I needed to start posting it now. Plus, I got a Kink Bingo card from 1_million_words and I can easily make bingo on it by writing in this prostitute AU. (I'll have to write a new story for the prostitution fest. But there are worse fates in this world!)

Special warm thanks to Kaige68 for proofing this. Without her, hands would quack and towels would cover lips. You do rock the most!!!
Sex is as important as eating or drinking and we ought to allow the one appetite to be satisfied with as little restraint or false modesty as the other. Marquis de Sade

This life was not what Steve had envisioned when he resigned from the Navy. His father’s murder had made the initial decision for him. It was the afterwards that he’d neglected to realize was the greater challenge. The structure the Navy provided him wasn’t easily replaced. He’d thought those lessons would transfer to civilian life. As hard as he’d tried, he failed to find the slot where he fit. His brief stint working for his friend Billy Harrington as private security was disastrous. He’d come to that even before he’d killed the man he was assigned to protect. That the man was a drug lord and the top of the cocaine trade in all of Hawaii did not mean it was acceptable for Steve to dispatch him. Billy had no choice but to distance himself from Steve, his only hope to not be targeted by the cartel.

Maybe, Steve thought in retrospect, he’d killed Makaha in hopes the cartel would seek retribution. Suicide by criminal. He wouldn’t be the first ex-SEAL to choose that solution. Billy had warned him that his demons would get the upper hand if Steve didn’t find some way to eradicate them, preferably without erasing himself from this life.

The house he’d inherited from his father had been paid off years before Steve was born. The taxes were an inconvenience but his combat pay helped offset that expense. He could no doubt live off his savings for several years but that wasn’t his way. He needed to be active, engaged, busy.

The island was wary of him. He couldn’t blame them. He looked in the mirror and saw a stranger, a man he did not recognize. He’d lost 25 pounds he couldn’t afford and the dark circles under his eyes were getting inkier by the day. If he didn’t find some way to occupy himself soon, he was going to be a danger to himself and the island. That’s why it started. But it wasn’t an excuse for continuing his new, risky life.

He’d been at a seedy bar within walking distance of his house. After he’d been arrested twice for DUI since becoming a civilian, he found a bar close enough for safety. Not that he was falling down into the bottle like so many of his former teammates had done. But bars were safe, anonymous, alive.

He was sitting in his usual spot, in a secluded corner of the long, wooden bar, his back against the sturdy wall, watching. Had there been a time when he’d have immediately joined the bodies writhing to the music on the dance floor? He didn’t know that he would have ever let down his guard that much. He liked to dance and had been told he had a natural grace that was infused with music. For now, he was content to watch. Maybe another whiskey and water and he’d join them.

“I’ve seen you here before,” a warm, dark voice said.

Steve followed that voice to find a tall, handsome man studying him. He looked vaguely familiar but Steve couldn’t quite place him. He hadn’t served with Tall, Dark, and Dangerous, for all he felt like he should know him. The low lights reflected off the man’s hairless scalp, his dark eyes in shadows that had nothing to do with the semi-darkness of the bar.

“Have you?” Steve asked, relishing the burn of whiskey as it warmed him on the inside. Too bad there wasn’t enough of it on the earth to thaw him completely.
“You always sit right here, looking like you’re waiting for someone,” the man said, moving closer to Steve. “Are you? Waiting?”

“Nobody in particular,” Steve said, sweeping the man from head to toe. His dark jeans were freshly washed and pressed. His shoes were shining from care and polish, his shirt crisp despite the heat. The white of his dress shirt contrasted beautifully with the dark skin smoothed over the man’s hardened body.

“Then I may be the one you’re looking for,” the man suggested, his smile alluring even as it predatory.

“What do you want?” Steve asked. He could take this man down if it came to it. Of that he was certain. His gut told him the man wanted to take him down but not in a fight. He wasn’t sure how he felt about the suggestion but he wasn’t repelled by it. That was a surprise and it made him brazen. “And how much is it worth to you?”

“So I’m not wrong,” the man said smoothly.

Steve shrugged with one shoulder, his muscles bunching under the tight white tee shirt he’d thrown on. It showed just enough of his tattoos to arouse curiosity.

Mentally, he was racing to keep up. If this turned out to be a business transaction, how much would he charge? As he’d never sold himself or bought the company of another, he couldn’t begin to decide what was the right amount.

“Depends,” Steve said, not letting his dilemma show on his face or in his voice.

“On?”

“What you’ll pay,” Steve said, licking his bottom lip. The man’s eyes traced the path of his tongue, the hunger already in his eyes building more.

“What are your rates?” the man asked, failing at his attempt to sound as though the answer was of no importance.

“Blow job’s $100. For an extra hundred, you can fuck me,” Steve said, his voice smooth, his heart racing.

“What if I want you to fuck me?” the man asked, considering what Steve had said.

“That’s a hundred,” Steve said.

“You haven’t been doing this very long, have you?” the man said, watching Steve closely.

“Not as long as some,” Steve said. That’s all he was willing to concede.

“All right. I’ll pay you $100 to fuck me. Then we’re going to talk about your rates. They need to be adjusted,” the man said.

“What’s your name?” Steve asked, studying him again. He was extremely attractive and obviously well-off. Made Steve wonder why he was resorting to picking up whores in a bar. Whores. Steve
supposed he was about to cross that line. He should have been more concerned about becoming meat than he was.

“You can call me Sam,” he responded. “Do you have some place safe?”

“No,” Steve lied. He was willing to sell his body to this stranger. He was not willing to soil his father’s house as he did it.

“All right,” Sam said, laying a crisp $50 on the counter for Steve’s drinks and the bartender’s silence. “Come to the King’s Inn. Room 445.”

“Room 445,” Steve acknowledged. He watched Sam walk away, stopping himself from following right behind. He’d see him again soon enough.

Steve walked the short distance to his house to collect his truck. He stopped on his way to the King’s Inn for supplies, not certain about that process either. If Sam was starting him down a new path, there was some research he was going to have to do. What would happen when he Googled ‘protocol for prostitutes’? He couldn’t begin to imagine.

His knock on the door of 445 was answered immediately. Sam wore nothing but a robe and smile.

“I was beginning to think you’d changed your mind,” Sam said as he backed up to let Steve in.

“Stopped by the drugstore,” Steve said, showing him the paper bag that hid the contents.

“Good policy,” Sam said, casually letting his robe drop.

Steve tried to pretend only mild interest in the body displayed for him but in truth, the man was a walking wet-dream. Hard muscles, sculpted abs, a sprinkling of hair in all the right places. A cock that was already showing interest, curving up toward the man’s flat stomach.

“Why do you buy company?” Steve asked, standing in place as Sam went to the bed to turn down the pristine white sheets.

“I’m in…public office,” Sam said, reclining on the pillows piled high behind him. His chocolate skin looked even more delicious in contrast to the stark white. “I can consort with as many women as I want.”

“I see,” Steve said. And he did. He’d seen it all the time in the Navy – SEALs could fuck as many women as they wanted and got high fives for using them. Let the rumor start that you’d fucked a man, or worse – allowed him to fuck you, and you became a pariah. Those with an interest in sex with their own gender were careful to keep it as far from their teammates as possible.

“How long have you been out of the service?” Sam asked, studying Steve with the same all-knowing expression he’d had in the bar.

“Some days it feels like forever,” Steve admitted, setting the bag on the nightstand by the bed.

“Mnhmm,” Sam said. “Civilian life not working out like you expected.”

“Something like that,” Steve said. “You hire me to talk?”
“What do you care? Either way, I’m paying you. Not like you have anywhere else to be,” Sam pointed out.

“It’s your time and money,” Steve agreed, standing beside the bed to gaze down at Sam with open admiration.

“You should charge $150 for a blow job, $250 for intercourse,” Sam said, sitting up enough to open Steve’s belt. “Once you have more experience, up it to $250 and $350. That’s for an hour. Any longer, and it’s $450 and $650.”

“Have a lot of experience hiring prostitutes?” Steve asked as Sam thumbed open his button. The sound of the zipper being lowered was unnaturally loud in the silence of the room.

“Enough to know you’re under pricing yourself.”

“What if I’m no good?” Steve asked, wondering why he was telling this man his secrets.

“Oh, baby. Your looks alone are worth those prices, although you do need to gain some weight. And I have no doubt you’ll deliver the goods.”

Steve considered his words. This man obviously had far more experience than he did. Until he learned differently, he’d take his advice.

“I want to blow you,” Sam said, lowering Steve’s jean. He was bare underneath, his cock springing up in greeting when his pants were around his thighs.

“Then I can’t fuck you,” Steve pointed out.

“You won’t come,” Sam said. “Not if you want to be paid.”

“All right,” Steve said, kicking off his shoes and stepping out of his jeans.

“No, sweet cheeks,” Sam sighed. “Not okay. If you come while I blow you, I still owe you.”

“The whole amount?” Steve asked, peeling his shirt off over his head. He looked down at Sam who was staring wide-eyed up at him. “Sam?”

“Yeah?” Sam responded, shaking himself out of the trance.

“If I come while you blow me, do you pay me the whole amount?” Steve asked again.

“Yes.”

“Okay,” Steve said, filing that information away.

“What is your name?” Sam asked, his legs over the side of the bed so he had better access to Steve. Steve was standing between his spread knees, Sam’s hands on his slender hips, holding him – not tightly but possessively.

“Should I tell you?” Steve asked. Apparently he’d decided this man was going to be his Yoda. Someone had to be if he was really going to enter this new life.
“You can lie. I won’t know. And I won’t try to find out the truth. If you trust me, tell me. If not, lie.”

“Is Sam your real name?” Steve asked as Sam left biting kisses on his stomach just over his plentiful pubic hair. Steve wondered if he should do something about that – have it groomed. He wasn’t overly hairy but maybe some men preferred it to be maintained.

“Yes,” Sam said, startling Steve. He’d forgotten he’d asked the question. “Where were you, baby?”

“Pubic hair,” Steve admitted, touching his lightly. “Wondering if I should…you know…trim it.”

“No,” Sam said. “Men who fuck men don’t want boys. Leave it.”

Steve nodded, mesmerized by the attention Sam was paying to his stomach and crotch. He hadn’t gotten anywhere near his cock and it was coated with pre-come. “Name’s Steve.”

“All right,” Sam said. “Do you have someone who can make you a fake ID?”

“Yes,” Steve said. He knew where the less savory parts of the island were located and where any manner of goods could be procured for the right price.

“Get several,” Sam instructed. “And at least one passport not in your real name.”

“Right,” Steve said.

“If you’re worried about having too much cash on you, open an account at one of the small banks. You can always use the night deposit if you don’t want anyone asking questions.”

“Checking or savings?” Steve asked. He had no idea being a whore would be so complicated. But until a couple of hours ago, he’d never considered it.

“Either. Doesn’t much matter. You can use your combat pay for most of your expenses.”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed.

“Do have a safe place to live?”

“Yes,” Steve said, shifting his hips so Sam couldn’t ignore his rock hard cock.

“I know you are getting impatient,” Sam said, looking up at him with an amused expression. “Get used to it.”

“Right,” Steve said, taking a deep breath. “Is being Yoda to brand new whores your full time job?”

That made Sam laugh. It was a nice laugh, deep and full-throated. “No. But you are so clearly lost, I can’t help but set you *correctly* down your new path.”

“Why?” Steve asked.

“Let’s just say I’ve been where you are. Not making this particular life choice. But if I hadn’t had someone step in to guide me, I’d have ended up dead. We’re cut from the same cloth.”

Steve had to nod at that. No use in trying to lie to Sam. He already knew the truth.
“Did you consciously decide to sell yourself?” Sam asked, finally, finally licking up the back of Steve’s cock. The sensations made it impossible for Steve to answer. He could only sway closer, silently begging for Sam to do that again. Sam complied, biting the thick vein and sucking on the tender place. Steve had no idea that could feel so… much. “Did you?”

“No,” Steve said, voice rough. “Not until you asked.”

“That’s what I figured,” Sam said.

“But you knew I’d agree,” Steve said through the swirling charges running up and down his entire body.

“Or you’d disagree in the strongest possible words. Didn’t much matter,” Sam said.

There was no room for words from either of them after that. Sam was too busy making Steve wild. Steve was doing everything possible to remain upright when what he really wanted was to lie down next to Sam and squirm, pant, beg.

“Here,” Sam said softly, guiding Steve down onto the bed. Steve grunted in thanks, lifting his hips to remind Sam what he had been doing. Sam laughed again, leaning over him to lick the tip of Steve’s cock. That nearly did Steve in. When Sam took him into his warm, deep mouth, Steve had no choice but to come with a groan that encompassed his entire body.

“Oh fuck,” Steve whispered when Sam had released his cock to bounce on Steve’s stomach. He was gasping for air, the entire world narrowed down to his orgasm.

“Glad you enjoyed it,” Sam said, sounding smug. If anyone had ever deserved to sound smug, it was Sam.

“What do you want?” Steve asked, managing to turn his head enough to squint at him.

“To fuck you,” Sam admitted.

“For $200,” Steve agreed.

“No,” Sam said in exasperation. “It’s $400 - $150 for the blow job, $250 for intercourse. Am I going to have to print rate charts for you?”

“Maybe,” Steve said. “I need business cards.”

“You do. Order them from the internet. Get a post office box. Less questions that way,” Sam advised, reaching over to get the condoms out of the bag. “And a prepaid cell.”

“Check,” Steve agreed, slowly sitting upright. “Let me.”

Sam nodded, surrendering the package to Steve. He opened it with ease, rolling it down over Sam’s ready cock. “You have experience?”

“Would I be here if I didn’t?” Steve asked, reaching over for the lube. “You want to do this?”

“Lay face down,” Sam decided, Steve doing it. He spread his legs wide, providing easy access. He
shifted when two of Sam’s well-lubed fingers entered him, lifting his hips in a silent request for more. “I’m coming. You are very greedy.”

Steve shrugged at that, his cheek resting on his folded arms. In truth, he enjoyed being fucked. Something about giving up control when he knew it was safe. Not something he readily admitted but most of the men he’d been with understood his desire. He also enjoyed being in control, a situation he often found himself in.

He inhaled as Sam slid into his body, enjoying the sensation of fullness it brought. Sam knew what he was doing, that was for sure. He withdrew part way before fully encasing himself, managing to prod Steve’s prostate each time. Steve would have appreciated the efforts if those sensations had an outlet. But he wasn’t going to get hard again, no matter how skilled Sam was.

“Fuck, you feel good,” Sam whispered. “All hard muscle and tanned flesh.” Sam continued to talk in the same low tone, the words growing more and more filthy as he got closer and closer to his climax. The combination of being fucked physically and verbally was almost enough to fill Steve’s cock but he wasn’t going to come again. Not so soon.

When Sam still, Steve clenched his ass muscles, Sam gasping and coming, pounding feverishly into Steve’s body. There would be bruises where Sam was holding onto his hips and possibly where his hips collided with Steve’s ass.

“How was that?” Steve asked when he could finally talk. “Charge $350.”

“You have that much cash on you?” Steve asked, making Sam smack the back of his head.

“Sweet luscious smart ass. That’s what you are.”

“You’re not the first to accuse me,” Steve said.

“I can imagine. You have trouble in the Army with that attitude?”


“Yeah,” Sam agreed, slowly withdrawing. He dealt with the condom, lying back to study Steve. “I have friends who would enjoy your services.”

“If you refer them, do I give you a percentage?”

“I have no plans to be your pimp,” Sam said. “You need business. I have friends in need of discreet no-questions-asked company.”

“All right,” Steve agreed. “How do I reach you?”

Sam gave him his phone number, assuring him it was his private number. Only he would answer. If he didn’t pick up, Steve should leave a message.

“Right,” Steve said. “I’m going to get a shower.”

“That’s fine,” Sam agreed, watching him stroll casually over to the bathroom. It didn’t take long for Steve to return naked, scrubbing his hair with a towel. “Can you come next Wednesday?”
“Sure,” Steve confirmed. “What time?”

“Come at 9:00. This room. I’ll be here,” Sam said as Steve sat on the bed next to him. His skin was still glistening from the left over moisture, looking even more delicious although Sam hadn’t thought that was possible.

“Don’t pay me this time,” Steve requested. “I feel like I owe you.”

“You don’t. But I understand. We’ll trade this one for ‘career advice.’”

“Yes,” Steve agreed.

“I’m not saying I’m going to be your mentor indefinitely,” Sam said. “But if you have any concerns, call me. Especially before you do anything stupid like buy a gun.”

“I already own one,” Steve told him. “I have no plans to use it on myself.”

“There are other ways to end it,” Sam said although he knew Steve was well aware of that particular truth.

“I don’t plan to. I would have stayed in the service if I was suicidal.”

“They’d have thrown your very fine ass out if they’d caught wind of it,” Sam pointed out. “Why did you leave?”

“Not ready for that,” Steve said, reaching over for his jeans.

“Didn’t mean to push,” Sam said, admiring the show as Steve dressed. “Is alcohol your anesthesia of choice?”

“If you’re asking if I do drugs, no. Never have. Don’t plan to start.”

“Good,” Sam said, leaving the bed to retrieve his robe. Once he had it secured, he walked Steve to the door. “Call me. And I’ll see you here next Wednesday.”

“Wednesday,” Steve confirmed. “It won’t be free.”

Sam laughed and nodded. “Good. You’re learning.”

“Always was a quick study,” Steve said, opening the door to leave, Sam’s laughter lingering in his head.
Chapter Summary

Steve imparts on his new life. Along the way, he's introduced to Danny and learns of Danny's reasons for his decisions.

_If nobody wants to sell sex, it is a crime to force anyone to do so. But when men or women do want to sell their bodies, they should have that full right without encountering punishment or discrimination. If the client behaves decently, the relationship between the sex buyer and the sex seller must be considered a purely private transaction._ ~Nils Johan Ringdal

The next day, Steve withdrew several hundred dollars from his bank. He needed the cash for the errands he had to run. It didn’t take long for him to find a source for fake documents, getting five for the price of four. That the forger was ex-Navy accounted for the discount. Thankfully his new connection didn’t ask any questions he wasn’t ready to answer.

The documents would take a week unless Steve absolutely needed them sooner. “A week is fine,” Steve decided, paying the stated price. He wondered if he should have haggled or only paid half until he had the goods. But he could find out where the forger lived and he had a feeling he knew that. Steve wouldn’t be cheated because the forger couldn’t work with broken fingers.

His next stop was acquiring a phone that was guaranteed untraceable and was renewable. Getting it in the rundown section of town kept the questions to a minimum. He suspected his dark glasses and unfriendly expression also forestalled questions from being asked.

Once his new phone was active, he used it to call Sam. There was no answer so Steve left a message including the number. He didn’t know if it would appear on Sam’s caller ID and wanted to make certain Sam knew how to reach him.

There was a post office not far from his house but when the very helpful clerk said he needed two forms of ID to rent a box, he said he had left them at home. The clerk was too busy flirting with Steve to question that and Steve was able to leave fairly quickly. If he rented the box with a fake ID, would it accept mail addressed to him? Or would he have to get a credit card that matched one of his fake names to order off the internet? Sam hadn’t said anything about opening the new bank account under an assumed name. Did that make more sense?

He had no way of knowing the best way to set himself up as a Man For Hire. Getting cash from his clients would be fine but how could he use that money to order business cards from the internet? Deciding the cards only needed his new phone number, he could pay for those straight up. They could be delivered to his house without any questions.

Resolving that to his satisfaction, he headed home. He was almost there when his new phone rang. “Hello,” he said, certain who was on the other end. Only one person knew the phone existed.

“You’ve been busy,” Sam said with a smile in his voice.
“It’s almost noon,” Steve said as though it explained everything.

“So it is,” Sam agreed. “I’m going to give your number to my friend Michael. Expect him to call after six tonight.”

“Yes,” Steve said.

“You okay? You sound distracted,” Sam said.

“Post office boxes,” Steve responded, making Sam laugh.

“Require two forms of ID,” Sam confirmed.

“Yeah. I won’t have them until next week. And the bank account. Can it be under a fake name?”

“That’s illegal,” Sam said.

“So’s being a prostitute,” Steve pointed out.

“Open an LLC,” Sam advised. “My Personal Consulting. Your bank account can be the same name.”

“That makes sense,” Steve said. “The PO Box can match.”

“Precisely. I have some knowledge in law if you need help,” Sam said.

“Are you a lawyer?” Steve asked as he got a bottle of water from his frig.

“Why did you leave the service?” Sam responded.

“Point taken.”

“Anything else you need right now?” Sam asked with great patience.

“No. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome, Steve. Please call if you need to,” Sam reminded him.

“I will,” Steve promised.

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It was much easier to become a prostitute than Steve had ever imagined, not that he’d envisioned that particular life for himself. Sam’s friend Michael was grateful, generous, and had friends who needed Steve’s discreet service. Steve’s only restriction was that the client had to provide the place. He would take care of everything else. That he had to be paid in cash was understood.

The rush of being for hire with its inherent danger was part of the appeal. He could admit to himself he’d been an adrenaline junkie. Probably still was. It was hard to remain a SEAL if you didn’t get off on the possibility of imminent death. Surviving was the ultimate high.
He met Sam every Wednesday night, refusing any other client who suggested that night and time. Sam continued to pay his beginner rate, partially because Steve was so grateful for his assistance, he couldn’t imagine charging him as much as he charged his other clients. At Sam’s advice, he’d begun charging the full rate of $450 for oral and $650 for intercourse. The time limit was removed for those prices. His clients paid him without blinking when he told them.

If his new bank wondered why he only deposited cash, no one ever inquired. He mostly did it through their ATMs, avoiding being face to face with any of the personnel. He had acquired his LLC and everything was done under that name. If the state ever got curious about the type of consulting he did, he could be as circumspect as necessary.

Along the way, he acquired several female clients. He didn’t mind servicing them but on the whole they were more work than his male clients. The men mostly wanted to fuck him. The women expected to be fucked and to come from it. He considered charging them more just for the inconvenience but he was already making more money than he could realistically spend so he kept his rates the same.

He had been meeting Sam for two months when the door to room 445 was answered by a short, blond man. Steve took a small step back, discombobulated. “I’m sorry,” he stuttered. “I must have the wrong room.”

“No mistake, babe,” the man said, waving him in. “Sam invited me to join the party.”

“Oh,” Steve said as he entered the room. “I’m Steve.”

“I know that,” the blond man laughed. “I’m Danny.”

Steve could tell this new man was a firecracker – small, compact, and set to explode any second. “He didn’t say anything about you coming.”

“Sorry, baby,” Sam said as he emerged from the bathroom wearing the familiar robe. “I thought you two should meet.”

“Yeah?” Steve said, looking from Sam to Danny. “Why’s that?”

“You have more clients than you can handle. Danny does too,” Sam explained. “Maybe it’s time you two branched out.”

“Branched out how?” Steve asked. He wasn’t following what Sam was saying. He didn’t know if it was the surprise to find someone else in the room or if it was the somebody else. Danny was all compact energy, his blue eyes sparking when he looked up at Steve.

“I have more experience,” Danny explained. “More clients. We should team up.”

“Team up,” Steve repeated.

“Like in the Army. Surely you understand the concept,” Danny said, laughing at his open confusion.

“How does that relate to us?” Steve asked.

“Back-up, babe. I’m tied up, I pass to you. You need a hand, you call me for back-up,” Danny explained.
“Oh,” Steve said. It was starting to become clear to him. They would cover for each other, share resources and leads. Not that he needed any more clients. But when some left for greener pastures, he’d need new sources of revenue. It made sense on a purely business basis.

“You got it now?” Danny asked, still laughing up at him.

“Yeah, I got it,” Steve said. “Do you do women?”

“If one has the money, I do,” Danny confirmed.

“Danny charges more than you do,” Sam added. “You’ll need to adjust your rates to match his.”

“Are you his mentor too?” Steve asked.

“Mentor,” Danny laughed.

Steve shrugged. He should object to Danny laughing at him but for reasons he was unable to grasp, he didn’t. “He’s been a huge help.”

“Someone had to watch your back, baby,” Sam said.

“And a nice back it is,” Danny said in appreciation.

“Thanks, I guess,” Steve said.

“You have any objections to putting on a show?” Sam asked Steve, running a familiar hand down Steve’s flank.

“You good with this?” Steve asked Danny, wanting to see what was so carefully hidden under that dress shirt and pressed trousers.

“He’s paying us. What do I care who I fuck?” Danny said.

“You didn’t ask,” Sam said in a tone of mild reproach to Steve.

“You always pay,” Steve pointed out. “Even when I don’t want you to.”

“You try to refuse?” Danny asked with a laugh.

Steve shrugged.

“Right. Mentor,” Danny said, taking a step closer to Steve. “Let’s see the goods, babe.” Danny encouraged him by lifting the edge of his tee shirt, Steve bending down enough so that Danny could pull it off over his head. “Mmm…real nice.”

Steve responded by reaching for the buttons on Danny’s shirt. Who wore a dress shirt when it was still 80 degrees outside? When he got it open, he realized it was worth the wait. Danny was covered with blond curls just begging to be stroked, bitten, pulled, explored.

“You like what you see?” Danny asked as he reached for Steve’s fly.
“Maybe,” Steve said, wishing he could sound as unimpressed as Danny. But Danny’s rapid breathing betrayed the truth. He was so turned on there was only a tiny ring of blue around the deep black of his pupils. Yeah, Steve was hardly alone in his arousal.

Sam settled in a chair close enough to the bed that he had an unobstructed view but with enough distance that he wouldn’t interfere. He untied the belt keeping his robe closed, not taking it off. But he had to have quick access to his dick that was already beginning to show interest.

Steve glanced over at Sam as Danny unzipped him. Sam winked.

“Commando. I should’ve guessed,” Danny said, slowly lowering Steve’s jeans. Steve kicked off his shoes, having learned straight away to wear shoes without laces. He’d found some loafers that didn’t look like he’d stolen them from his father, plain, expensive, and oh-so-comfortable.

“I’m betting you are,” Steve said, not wasting any time. He opened Danny’s belt, undoing the button and zipper, helping Danny step out of his trousers. As Steve predicted, he too was bare beneath.

Steve encircled Danny’s hard cock with his hand, admiring the heft of it. It was like the man himself, shorter than Steve, more stout. Steve’s cock was a little longer and a little leaner. Danny’s pubic hair was the same color as the down that covered his entire body, golden and soft.

“Beautiful,” Danny breathed when he had fisted Steve’s erection. “Just beautiful.”

“Mmm…” Steve hummed, guiding Danny to the bed and helping him lay down. “You have a preference?” he asked Sam over Danny’s shoulder.

Sam waved at them. He didn’t care. The show had already made him rock hard.

Steve turned Danny onto his back, kissing down his front to his erection. It was a thing of beauty. He didn’t waste any time, immediately taking it into his mouth.

“Oh babe,” Danny said. “You do undercharge.” Danny’s hands were buried in Steve’s curls, not guiding but holding on so he wasn’t swept away.

At Sam’s urging, Steve had let his hair grow enough that it could be gripped. He would have preferred it even longer but understood Steve’s reticence to let it grow out too much.

Steve looked up at Danny, his eyes a fiery green-blue. Danny knew he’d never seen a more beautiful sight than his dick surrounded by Steve’s hot, talented mouth, Steve staring straight at him as he sucked.

“Don’t want to come this way,” Danny panted, managing to lift up on his elbows. “Babe.”

Steve finally let him go, licking him once more in regret. “Condom,” Steve breathed, gesturing over at them. Danny got one, handing it down to Steve with hands that were shaking. Steve got it on Danny, accepting the lube. Making sure Sam had a clear view, Steve shoved two slick fingers into his hole, gasping at the pleasure it gave him.

“Oh Sam’s urging, Steve had let his hair grow enough that it could be gripped. He would have preferred it even longer but understood Steve’s reticence to let it grow out too much.

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“You always this impatient?” Steve asked with a grin, positioning himself right about Danny’s
waiting cock.

“He talks too much too,” Sam said, his voice strained.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Everybody’s a critic,” Danny said. His grip on Steve’s thighs would leave marks for several days.

Steve finally gave into the desperation painted on Danny’s face, lowering himself to accept Danny in. “Oh yeah….” Steve groaned as Danny breeched his opening. He remained still over Danny, savoring the stretch and burn. It was delicious.

“Come on,” Danny pleaded, hitching up his hips. Steve looked down at him with a smug grin, not moving. “I will kill you.”

“No you won’t,” Steve said, finally giving in and moving over Danny.

Danny could only moan in pleasure as Steve rode him. He managed to lift his hips as Steve was coming down, impaling Steve even more. Steve’s head was back, the cords of his neck standing out in sharp relief. Perfectly formed droplets of sweat rolled down his chest until they were stopped by the hair there. Danny wanted to be one of those droplets. He wanted to lick them up one by one. He wanted to bury himself in Steve and remain there for the foreseeable future. He wanted.

Steve had to close his eyes to prevent his head from swimming away. The pleasure was more intense than he could remember for a long time. Maybe because he had permission to feel it. Or perhaps because Danny wasn’t simply another trick. Whatever the reason, Steve wanted Danny. As he hadn’t wanted anything within memory.

Steve tried to prolong their time but he could feel Danny’s climax approaching. His own was right at the periphery, ready to explode over them both. Steve clinched his muscles, Danny moaning in pure, unmitigated pleasure. They came at the same time, Steve splashing Danny’s chest and stomach. The bruises Danny left on Steve’s thighs would be reminders for a couple of weeks at least.

Steve caught himself on his elbows, enough sense remaining to not crush Danny under him. Danny pulled him down, wrapping his arms tight like he had no intention of ever letting go. Steve was good with that.

His afterglow was momentarily interrupted when Sam groaned. He looked over in time to see him come, his body poetry in his orgasm. Certain Sam was satisfied, Steve turned his attention back to Danny, smiling over at him. “Did I break you?”

“Yeah,” Danny said with a sigh. “Yeah you did.”

“Good,” Steve said, licking up the side of Danny’s neck. They were both still panting, working to get their breath back. The only sounds for the next few minutes were the gasps of air they were each gulping.

“I’m going to shower. Then you two can have it,” Sam said breathlessly. He was mostly recovered, able at least to shower. They nodded, watching him go into the bathroom.

“You are very talented,” Danny said in admiration.

“You too,” Steve said, raising up enough to look down at him. “Is Sam a client?”
“Was,” Danny said. “Until an ex-serviceman took him.”

“Sorry,” Steve said, making Danny laugh.

“Babe,” Danny said. “You have no reason to be. He and I were mostly done. Even though he’s one of my favs, nothing lasts forever.”

“But the earth and sky,” Steve said, making Danny laugh.

“That’s just stupid.”

“That’s Kansas,” Steve corrected.

“As I am well aware,” Danny assured him. “It’s still stupid.”

“Says you,” Steve said. Apparently really good sex turned him into a five year-old.

Their argument was interrupted when Sam left the bathroom. “It’s all yours,” he said, a bright white towel slung low over his hips. Steve licked his lips to see him like that.

“Thanks,” Danny said, shoving Steve to get him going. Steve climbed off, leading Danny to the warm, steamy bathroom. They didn’t linger in the shower, agreeing a nap was the next order of business.

They dried each other, savoring the chance to touch and enjoy. Once they were out of the bathroom, they climbed back into bed at Sam’s invitation. He was peeling off bills to leave on the counter. They knew they didn’t need to count it. It would all be there.

“The room’s paid for,” Sam said once he was ready to leave. “I’ll see you Wednesday.” He kissed Steve lightly on the forehead, the first time he’d ever done that. Then he was gone.

“So how’d you end up banging the lieutenant governor?” Danny asked when Steve had turned over to face him.

“He asked. I agreed,” Steve said.

“Did you know? Who he was?”

“Not that first time. I figured it out a couple of days afterwards,” Steve said.

“Does he know you know?” Danny asked, trailing light fingers up and down Steve’s chest.

“We don’t discuss it. I don’t tell him why I left the Navy. He doesn’t tell me why the lieutenant governor uses a hooker,” Steve said.

“Navy, huh? Sam said service. I thought he might not know,” Danny said.

“I’m assuming he figured it out. One of those off-limits topics,” Steve said, gasping when Danny pinched his nipple. Not hard, just enough to get a reaction.

“Like that, do you?” Danny asked, leaning closer to lick away the sting. “Why’d you tell me? That
you’re ex-Navy?”

“What are you going to do with the intel?” Steve asked. “Not like you can have me arrested.”

“There is that. Although I do still have a few friends on the force,” Danny said.

“Force? Like the Honolulu Police Force?”

“Yeah,” Danny said, flopping down on his back. “I was accused of stealing from evidence lock-up.”

“I heard that a haole took almost a million dollars,” Steve said. “That was you?”

“If I had stolen a million dollars, would I be a whore?” Danny asked.

“So it was you they accused,” Steve said.

“I was a convenient scapegoat. Mainlander, new to the force. Didn’t have enough friends to back me up. I didn’t have an alibi so they decided I’d done it. Took my gun and badge,” Danny said, not keeping the bitterness out of his voice. As many times as he’d told the story of his supposed criminal past, it still didn’t get any easier.

“You know who took the money?” Steve asked, angry at the injustice that had been perpetrated.

“I have my ideas. But I can’t prove it. Even if I did, I couldn’t go back on the force. Some of my former coworkers are clients,” Danny admitted.

“Keeps you out of jail,” Steve said.

“Another reason Sam wanted to get us together,” Danny said, turning back to look at Steve. “I’m glad he did.” There was no bluster in those words, no baiting or double meaning.

“Me too,” Steve said. “When can we get together again?”

“Reach me my pants and I’ll check my calendar,” Danny said.

Steve leaned over him to collect Danny’s pants, searching out his phone. He lay snug up against Danny as he scrolled through his appointments.

“I happen to have an opening tomorrow afternoon,” Danny said, showing Steve the list.

“No,” Steve said. “I’m booked. Tomorrow night?”

“Have a client,” Danny said, shaking his head.

“It’s at 7:00. How long will it be?” Steve asked.

“Usually an hour,” Danny said. “You don’t mind seeing me right after?”

“No,” Steve admitted. “Come to my house. I have a shower. I’ll make you dinner.”

“You sure?” Danny asked, studying Steve. He only saw sincerity in his eyes, no bullshit, no neediness. Just a desire for Danny’s company.
“We’ve already fucked. We should at least have a date,” Steve said, making Danny laugh.

“If you’re sure,” Danny said. “What’s your address?”

Steve told him, reaching into his jeans for his business card. Danny put it in his shoe, promising not to lose it. “Why didn’t you return to New Jersey when you were fired?” Steve asked into the comfortable silence.

“Who said I’m from Jersey?” Danny said, making Steve laugh. “All right. I am.”

“Why didn’t you?” Steve asked, looking over at him.

Danny had closed his eyes, his hands in fists on top of the covers.

“I’m sorry,” Steve said. “Forget I asked.”

“No,” Danny said. “I need to tell you.”

“All right,” Steve agreed, caressing Danny’s cheek with the back of his hand.

“I had a daughter,” Danny said softly. “Her mother and I divorced. She remarried and moved here. I followed them. A year after we got here, Rachel and…mmm…Grace were killed in a car accident. When the evidence locker was being robbed, I was slobbering drunk. It was two months after the accident and I think I was trying to die the same way. I got a bottle of whiskey and my car keys. The rest is pretty blurry but thank God I didn’t kill anyone or myself.”

“That’s…wow,” Steve said. “I’m really sorry, man.”

“Me too,” Danny said. “I was fucked up in a major way. Then I was fired. I thought losing Grace was the lowest point of my life. Losing my job on top of it nearly killed me. Once I finally sobered up, I had to find a way to make a living on this sand infested hell-hole.”

“You could have gone back to Jersey,” Steve said.

“I was too embarrassed. And in too much pain. I started turning tricks and discovered it works for me. I was already a disgraced cop and a mourning father. It was a relief to find something I was good at. It’s completely different from my former life.”

“You reinvented yourself,” Steve said, watching the pain flicker across Danny’s face.

“Just like you did,” Danny agreed. “I knew your father. He was one of the good guys. He never thought I had stolen the money.”

“How do you know my father was a cop?” Steve asked, not concerned about it.

“The precinct isn’t that big,” Danny said. “There were pictures of you on his desk. He talked about his son Steve, the SEAL, how proud he was of you.”

“Wouldn’t be quite so proud now I don’t think,” Steve confessed.

“Babe, we do what we have to in order to survive. He understood that. And he was a great cop.”
“He didn’t entirely trust some of the others. I think that’s how Hesse got to him. He couldn’t count on them,” Steve said, bitterness he couldn’t hide in his voice.

“But you took care of Hesse,” Danny said.

“Yeah,” Steve said. “Billy didn’t mind when I killed him. It was killing Makaha that did me in.”

“He was lowest of the low. I know some cops who wanted to give you a medal when you took him out,” Danny said. “Chances are good if you solicited business at Ala Moana Center, they’d turn a blind eye.”

“Good to know,” Steve said. “When’s your first appointment tomorrow?”

“Lunch. You?”

“Breakfast. She likes to use me for a table,” Steve admitted. He scowled when Danny laughed at him. “It’s the easiest $650 I earn.”

“That’s it? She’s eats off you and pays your full rate?” Danny asked.

“Sometimes she wants me to get her off. No fucking. Hands only.”

“Not even oral?”

“No,” Steve said. “She’s eccentric in the extreme.”

“I can tell.”

“She’d have me full time. Being a whore is one thing. Being kept is entirely different.”

“You still have your freedom this way,” Danny agreed.

“Exactly. Who was your first?”

“A cop buddy,” Danny said. “He hated admitting he liked guys. He was married back then. Couldn’t reconcile being a cop and being gay. He helped me sober up. I may have let him fuck me out of gratitude. Felt natural somehow. He said there were others on the force who would appreciate a date with me. I agreed. And that was it.”

“You do mostly cops?”

“At first,” Danny said. “I’ve branched out since then. Anybody with the money as long as I trust them. I meet them in public first. At a coffee shop or one of the dive bars. If it doesn’t feel right, we part ways. No hard feelings.”

“Makes sense,” Steve agreed. “Mine are all referrals. I think I’ve fucked the entire state senate. I’m working on the house of representatives next.”

“All 51 of them?” Danny laughed.

“It’s good to have a goal,” Steve said, enjoying Danny’s laugh.
“Yes it is,” Danny said.

“What is your last name?” Steve asked.

“Williams. Not that my tricks know that. To them I’m mostly Jersey. Except the ones who knew me as a cop. To them I’m the haole.”

“I tell most people my name’s Freddie. I went through BUDs with him. He was killed on a mission. I guess it’s disrespectful to use his name but he wouldn’t mind.”

“You ever do him?”

“No,” Steve said with a sigh. “We didn’t want to risk it. Could have been death to our careers.”

“Yeah,” Danny said. “I’m sorry you lost him.”

“Me too,” Steve said. “Not as hard as losing a daughter.”

Danny closed his eyes momentarily at that, taking a deep breath. “Part of you dies with them. Parents should not outlive their children. Not the natural order.”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed, his eyelids drifting down all on their own. “I need to set my alarm.”

“I got it,” Danny assured him. “Sleep, babe. I’ll get you up in time.”

“Mmmm…” Steve sighed, relaxing snug up against Danny. He liked the way their bodies fit so perfectly together. He liked everything about his new friend who he was sure would be much more.
Chapter Summary

Steve and Danny get to know each other better, discovering how well they fit into each other’s life.

*Life is a series of collisions with the future. ~José Ortega y Gasset*

Danny woke Steve early enough the next morning so that they had time for slow, intense lovemaking. And that’s what it was – not a quick fuck, not turning a trick. It was making love. It didn’t matter that they’d just met. Their futures were already aligned. They both knew it.

“You’ll be at my house by 8:30,” Steve said when they were both dressed and ready. Steve had brought clean clothes in acknowledgment that Sam sometimes wanted him to stay the night.

“I’ll be there,” Danny said. “Do I need to bring anything?”

“Nope. I have food and beer. Anything you don’t eat?”

“Pineapple on pizza,” Danny said, tucking in his shirt. He gave Steve the stink-eye when he caught him staring in amazement.

“You are a haole.”

“Pineapple has no business consorting with pizza. None,” Danny said.

“All right. No pineapple on pizza,” Steve said, bending down to kiss him. “I’ve got to go. I’ll see you tonight.”

“Yep,” Danny agreed, reaching up for one last kiss before reluctantly releasing him.

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It was precisely 8:30 when Danny knocked on Steve’s front door. He was admiring the garden as he waited, seeing the care that had gone into over the years.

“Hey,” Steve said when he had the door open. “Come on in.”

Danny did it, stepping out of his shoes as soon as he crossed the threshold. “Something smells amazing.”

“I’m grilling steaks,” Steve said, leading him through the house. He stopped in the kitchen for two cold beers, handing one to Danny. “You need a shower?”
“I showered at the client’s,” Danny said.

“Okay,” Steve said, going out him with onto the lanai.

“Ocean-front property,” Danny said, shaking his head. “Didn’t tell me you were a land baron.”

“My grandfather built the house,” Steve explained. “Taxes are a bitch but it’s worth it.”

“To have sand everywhere? The sound of the ocean incessantly?”

“We’re on an island. There’s sand everywhere already. And who doesn’t love the sound of the ocean?” Steve asked, studying Danny in the dim light shining through the windows.

“I like cities,” Danny said. “Not a fan of the beach.”

Steve could only shake his head at that, sitting in one of the beach chairs close by the grill. Danny automatically sat next to him to savor his beer.

“You have appointments tomorrow?” Steve asked into the comfortable silence.

“One at 3:00. That’s it. You?”

“I don’t accept clients on Fridays. I need one day that’s all my own,” Steve admitted.

“Yeah,” Danny said. “Fridays are slow anyway. Sundays are my busiest day. Never could figure out why.”

“Mine’s Monday,” Steve said.

“Because the legislature doesn’t meet on Mondays?” Danny asked with a laugh.

“Could be,” Steve agreed. “Do your parents know the truth?”

“I think they do,” Danny said with a shrug. “We stick to a strict ‘don’t ask don’t tell’ policy. They know I’m happier now. I fly home sometimes, especially for the holidays. They are always glad to see me. Tell me I should move back.”

“Have you considered it?” Steve asked. He hoped he didn’t sound as desperate to Danny as he did in his own head.

“Yeah,” Danny admitted. “But I’d have to find a legitimate job. Police work has lost its appeal. I couldn’t turn tricks in my hometown. Maybe I’ll go back one day. I’m fine with my life the way it is.”

“You’d miss Hawaii. Everyone does once they’ve lived here.”

“I guess,” Danny said. “It is beautiful. And has the most beautiful people I’ve ever seen.”

“There is that,” Steve agreed, feeling Danny’s appreciative eyes on him.

“You’d know all about the beautiful people,” Danny said in sincerity.
“Stop,” Steve said, standing up to see to the steaks.

“It’s true. Gorgeous. That’s what you are,” Danny said.

“And you aren’t?”

“I’m short and white. That makes me a nobody.”

“And loud. Don’t forget loud,” Steve said with a laugh.

“Thanks. Let’s add up all of my other faults.”

“Nah,” Steve said. “Steaks are nearly done. It’d be a waste of food to list all your faults.”

Danny had no choice but to laugh with him. It felt good to be relaxed, to be himself. He spent so much of his time being a whore, he sometimes forgot what simply being him was like. That was the gift Steve was providing to him.

“You char some fine meat,” Danny said, saluting him with his beer bottle when they had finished eating.

“Thanks,” Steve said, standing to collect the dishes. “I have ice cream if you want.”

“I couldn’t eat another bite,” Danny said, collecting the rest of the dishes to follow him in the house.

“Are you spending the night?” Steve asked as he began to wash up.

“I’d like that,” Danny agreed, crowding closer to Steve.

“Me too,” Steve said, using his soap covered hands to grasp Danny’s very fine ass and pull him tight to his body. Danny looked up in anticipation, getting lost in the kiss. Steve was an expert kisser, a black belt at it. He could give lessons on the art of it.

“You are thinking too much,” Steve whispered into Danny’s ear.

“I know. I do it all the time,” Danny admitted, biting Steve’s neck above the collar of his polo. “Must be cop training.”

“Probably,” Steve agreed, releasing him to return to the dishes. “I called Billy Harrington today.”

“He take your call?” Danny asked as he dried the plates.

“Usually does. He said if you have evidence on who stole the money from the locker, he’s willing to resolve the matter.”

Danny shook his head, as grateful as he was. “I can’t prove it. And I can’t condemn a man without due cause.”

“You know Chin Ho Kelly, right?” Steve said, handing him another clean plate.

“Yeah. Another of the good guys. Why?”
“Chin thinks it was a cop named Kaleo. Is that who you think did it?”

“Yeah,” Danny confirmed. “How do you know Chin?”

“We went to the same high school. And Dad was his training officer.”

“Makes sense,” Danny said.

“Chin is willing to come over to compare notes. He wanted to discuss it with you but he couldn’t find out how to reach you.”

“Because he’s not gay,” Danny said. “Some of the cops were afraid he’d turn me in. Chin has a moral code that is firm in its honor.”

“He’d never arrest either of us,” Steve said. “He considers me ohana. Can’t say he’s thrilled with my choices but he’s not one to interfere.”

“Yeah,” Danny agreed. “All right. If he wants to talk it over, I good with it.”

“Good,” Steve said. “When?”

“Mmm… tomorrow night? Is he available that quick?”

“Let’s see,” Steve said, pulling out his regular phone. He held in the crook of his shoulder as he continued to wash up from supper. “Howzit?...yeah?... that’s good to hear….I talked to Danny. You free to come over tomorrow night?...Doesn’t matter. Come at six. I’ll make dinner….you know I don’t mind…yes, you can bring the beer….Great. See you then.”

“I need to get my notes,” Danny said, considering it. “I’ll run by my apartment after my appointment. Then I can come straight here.”

“Good,” Steve said. “And don’t accept appointments on Fridays.”

Danny laughed at that. It lit his entire face. “Babe. We’ve known each other for barely 24 hours.”

“Doesn’t matter,” Steve said.

“All right,” Danny conceded, shoulder bumping him. “No more Fridays for the clients.”

“Good,” Steve said, handing him the last dish to dry. “I taped the Yankees game if you want to watch it,” Steve said casually. He smiled at Danny’s surprised expression.

“Really?”

“Yes really,” Steve said. “I thought it was something you might be interested in. Unless you’ve already seen it.”

“No, no,” Danny said quickly. “I don’t have the Major League channel.”

“You want popcorn?” Steve asked with a laugh.

“Just another beer,” Danny said, getting two out of the refrigerator.
“Are you an alcoholic?” Steve asked with no concern for the answer.

“No. I could have been but it doesn’t affect me like that. I know cops who are. I escaped that particular curse.”

“Me too,” Steve confirmed, going with him into the living room.

They settled on Steve’s couch like they had been doing it for years. Neither acknowledged the fact, or that watching the Yankees game together felt as natural as breathing.

Carlos Beltran struck out looking with two outs and two men on in the bottom of the eighth, the Yankees down by one run. Steve watched in open amusement when Danny berated him, calling him every name in the book. Danny was fired up and Steve liked it.

“He’s one of your favorite Yankees, huh?” Steve asked when Danny was beginning to simmer down. That started Danny on a new verbal rampage about outfielders and their arrogance and their inability to hit in the clutch and the sorry state of the Yankees as a whole.

When Beltran climbed the outfield wall to stop a three-run homerun, he managed to redeem himself in Danny’s eyes. But then the Yankees failed to score in their half of the ninth inning, and Danny placed the blame squarely on Beltran.

“It’s only the second month of the season,” Steve reminded him as Danny railed against the stupid Yankees, vowing to never watch another one of their stupid games.

Danny turned his stink eye on Steve as though Steve was the one who had failed to get the runners home.

“Let’s go to bed,” Steve said with a laugh, standing and holding out his hand to Danny. Danny took it, following Steve upstairs and into the bathroom. On the counter was a brand new toothbrush still in the wrapper.

“Thank you, babe,” Danny said when he’d picked it up. He had a soft, fond look on his face, one Steve hadn’t been witness to until now.

Steve shrugged, continuing to brush his teeth. He was pleased that he’d surprised Danny and hoped to have a chance to do it again soon. “You like pancakes?” Steve asked as he left the bathroom.

“Yeah,” Danny agreed, following him out. “This bed looks amazing.”

“It is. I spent way too much on it,” Steve admitted.

“After sleeping in foxholes and on the ground, it makes sense you’d want the best.”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed, stripping out of his clothes and putting them in the hamper. He gave Danny a hanger since he hadn’t brought a change. “Plus the bed that was here belonged to my parents.”

“Good decision then,” Danny said with a smile. He slipped between the fresh, cool sheets, thinking it was one of the most delicious sensations he’d ever experienced. “This is sinful.”

“It is,” Steve agreed. “One of the reasons I never have clients here.”
“I don’t bring them home either. But that’s mainly because I live on the wrong side of the tracks. And I’m blessed with Mr. and Mrs. Too Fucking Loud as my neighbors.”

“Oahu doesn’t have railroads,” Steve said, laughing when Danny punched him in the rib cage.

“You know perfectly well what I mean,” Danny said in a huff.

“Do I?” Steve asked, rolling over on top of Danny.

“Huh?” Danny said, looking up at him, his eyes soft, his tongue tracing his lips.

Steve decided exploring Danny’s lips was something he needed to be in charge of, leaning down to capture his mouth. Tongues chased, teeth clashed, lips savored. It wasn’t far from there until they were fully enveloped in love-making of the very best kind.

“Mmm…” Danny sighed when they lay sated and boneless. He had managed to prop his head on his hand, his left hand tracing up and down the toned muscles on Steve’s back. “No wonder Sam threw me overboard.”

Steve smiled innocently at that. His face was half hidden in the soft pillow, his eye crinkling at the corners. Danny had no choice but to lean down and kiss those lines, wanting to be the one that put them there every chance he got.

“You need a shower?” Steve asked in a lazy voice.

“Nah. The condom dealt with it. You?”

Steve shook his head, watching Danny as he shifted closer to Steve’s body.

“This is nice,” Danny said unnecessarily.

“It is,” Steve agreed. “I think I’ve …mmm…never mind.”

“Lonely?” Danny guessed. Steve shrugged but Danny knew he was right. “Me too. I didn’t have a lot of friends when I was still on the force. Afterwards, well, you can imagine.”

“I was used to being with my team 24 hours a day. I don’t mind the solitude but sometimes it’s a little overwhelming.”

“I get that,” Danny agreed.

“Why don’t you move into a better apartment?” Steve asked in a drowsy voice.

“Doesn’t much matter. I don’t spend a lot of time there. It’s mostly where I change clothes,” Danny said, laying down snug up to him. Steve rolled onto his side, fitting Danny into the curves of this body.

“Yeah. Makes sense,” Steve said, kissing Danny lightly as they both drifted off. “’Night.”

“Goodnight, babe,” Danny said in utter contentment.
Golf With Friends

Chapter Summary

Chin agrees to help them discover who really stole the money from the evidence locker.

*Friends are like walls. Sometimes you lean on them, and sometimes it’s good just knowing they are there.* –Author Unknown

Chin came over the next night for dinner, Danny already there and freshly showered. He had his files with him, a manila folder that was about an inch thick.

“Good to see you again,” Chin said to Danny when Steve had let him in and had taken the six-pack of beers from Chin.

“You too,” Danny said, hugging Chin like an old, lost friend. “You’re looking good.”

“You look one hell of a lot better than the last time I saw you,” Chin said with a smile.

“Since I’m not drowning at the bottom of a bottle, I’d say so,” Danny agreed.

“You want one of these beers now?” Steve asked Chin, leading him and Danny back into the kitchen where there was delicious smelling pan of pork chops on the stove.

“Sure,” Chin agreed, accepting it. “I’m glad you called me.”

“Me too,” Steve said, looking over at Danny.

“Here’s my cell number,” Danny said, giving Chin a slip with it written down. It also had his address, on the off chance Chin ever needed it for anything. “If you don’t reach me, leave me a message.”

“Got it,” Chin agreed. “I have the feeling I can also find out where you are from Steve.”

Danny shrugged, smiling over at Steve. “It’s still real new. Don’t know where it might go.”

“You’re good for him,” Chin said to Steve. “I can see that already.”

“We can never have enough friends,” Steve said, getting the baked potatoes out of the oven.

“True that,” Chin said, asking if there was anything he could do to help. He was assigned to getting the salad, Danny responsible for the plates and silverware.

After they ate the delicious food Steve had made, with many raves for his skill, they compared the information Danny had with that which Chin collected.
“If they were so sure, why didn’t they arrest you?” Steve asked after they’d reviewed all the files.

“No physical evidence,” Chin said. “They couldn’t find where he’d supposedly stashed the money. They claimed to have enough evidence to blame Danny but not enough to act on it.”

“They still fired you,” Steve said.

“I’d missed a lot of work,” Danny said, not sounding as angry as was his right. “When I did show up, I was as likely to be half drunk as not.”

“Losing a child will do that to a person,” Chin said.

“If I weren’t a haole, they might have been more lenient. I think they were looking for an excuse to get rid of me,” Danny said with less bitterness each time he said it.

“So you think it was Kaleo?” Steve asked them both.

“That’s what the rumor mill says. Danny’s old partner Meka always thought it was him,” Chin said.

“Meka and Kaleo never saw eye-to-eye,” Danny said. “Kaleo would insult me. Meka would stand up for me.”

“Still have bad blood,” Chin agreed. “Meka could help us.”

“What do you think?” Steve asked when Danny didn’t say anything right away.

“I’m sure he knows what I’m doing. But I haven’t really talked to him since I left,” Danny said, considering each word.

“He knows and he understands,” Chin promised him. “Nobody who knows you judges your choices. We wish you had some real alternatives but if we were in your shoes, we can’t say for sure we wouldn’t have made the same decision.”

“Thanks,” Danny said, seeing the sincerity on Chin’s face. He also heard it in the words. Chin had always been on Danny’s side. He was glad that hadn’t changed. “Let’s see what we can find first. If we don’t get anywhere, you can ask Meka.”

“Fair enough,” Chin said.

“If this Kaleo took it, where’s it now?” Steve asked, looking over their notes for any trace of it.

“I heard he had ties to Makaha,” Danny said. “You ever hear of him?”

“No,” Steve said. “And Makaha wouldn’t need stolen money. He had plenty of his own.”

“Unless the money had originally been his,” Chin said in realization. He searched through the files, coming up with a copy of the original report from the evidence locker. “It says here it was seized from Nui I’a Holding Company.”

“Nui i’a,” Steve said. “Big fish.”

“Does that sound familiar?” Danny asked Steve.
“No but that doesn’t mean it wasn’t Makaha,” Steve said. “Why was it seized?”

“Mmm…” Chin said, scanning the form. “Material evidence in an ongoing investigation concerning racketeering and money laundering.”

“He was heavy in both of those,” Steve confirmed.

“It’s a wonder you haven’t been taken out,” Danny said.

“His underboss Tua appreciated my assistance. When I killed Makaha, he took the reins,” Steve said. “That keeps the target off my back for the most part.”

“And once you eliminated Makaha, who had the balls to take you on?” Danny said with a laugh.

“Something like that,” Steve agreed.

“Why did you kill him?” Chin asked in curiosity. “Not that every officer in blue isn’t grateful.”

“He was trafficking minors, mostly female,” Steve said with a hardened voice. “Tua didn’t like it either. He doesn’t have many scruples but that was a line even he thought shouldn’t be crossed.”

“Less scum on the earth,” Danny said. “So what do we do now?”

“Can you ask Tua if Kaleo took the money?” Chin asked.

“We didn’t become best friends,” Steve said in hesitation. “Was Kaleo trying to become a cog in Makaha’s organization?”

“If anyone would, it’d be him,” Chin said, Danny nodding in agreement.

“See if you can contact Tua, babe. Worse that happens is he refuses to talk to you,” Danny said.

“Seems to me he still owes you,” Chin said in encouragement.

“We could go see him. He plays golf at Oahu Country Club every Tuesday morning,” Steve said.

“Oahu Country Club,” Danny repeated, considering it.

“Yeah,” Steve said, waiting.

“My…mmm… ex-wife’s… husband belongs to Oahu Country Club,” Danny said. “If I call him, he’ll let us play with him.”

“On a Tuesday morning,” Steve said.

“Do you golf?” Danny asked him.

“No but I can caddy,” Steve said.

“That’s perfect,” Chin said. “You can rent clubs, right?”
“Stan has extra. They’ll be too big for me but what does it matter if my score is through the roof?” Danny said.

“Do you golf?” Steve asked Chin.

“I can. I’m not any good but I know how it works.”

“And Stan will agree?” Steve asked Danny to make sure.

“Stan and I aren’t exactly tight but he is the one person who knows how it feels,” Danny said quietly.

“Shared grief is a tight bond,” Chin said.

“It is,” Danny said.

“Does he know? What you’re doing now?” Steve asked in a soft voice. Who was and was not aware of how they made a living was an on-going question for them both.

“He knows. He doesn’t approve but he doesn’t judge. I think he understands how it happened.”

“Good,” Steve said.

“All right,” Danny said, grabbing Steve’s wrist to look at his watch. It said it was 7:50. “I’ll call him now. See if we can get a time on a Tuesday.”

“I can clear my schedule,” Steve confirmed, looking over at Chin. “You’ll be able to come, right?”

“I’ll take a personal day. I don’t want it getting out what we’re doing,” Chin said.

“What time does Tua tee off?” Danny asked.

“At 9:45,” Steve said.

Danny nodded, taking out his cell phone. He dialed it, waiting only through two rings before it was answered. “Hi Stan.”

“Danny,” Stan said, something like relief in his voice. “Are you all right?”

“I’m fine,” Danny assured him. “You doing okay?”

“Yeah. You know. Work helps,” Stan said. “Won’t you come over for dinner soon?”

“No but I’ll meet you somewhere,” Danny offered.

“Sure,” Stan agreed. “How about that pizza place you like so much? Sunday night?”

“I’d like that,” Danny said, surprised that he meant it. “How about 6:00?”

“That would be fine,” Stan said.

“I need a favor,” Danny said, seeing no reason to beat around the bush.
“You know I’ll help if I can,” Stan said sincerely.

“Can you get a tee time at the Club for 10:00 on a Tuesday?” Danny asked.

“Does this have anything to do with Tua?” Stan guessed.

“You want the truth?” Danny asked.

“Yes.”

“He may be able to prove I didn’t steal the money,” Danny said.

“Then of course I’ll book a round. How many will be coming?”

“Me and Chin Ho Kelly will be golfing. I’ll be bringing a friend as back-up. To caddy,” Danny said.

“I’m pretty sure I can get us on the course next Tuesday,” Stan said.

“Perfect,” Danny said. “You can confirm when we have dinner.”


“You are welcome to call me, Stan,” Danny said warmly.

“I know. I’ll see you Sunday,” Stan said before hanging up.

“There we go,” Danny said with a nod of satisfaction.

“If Tua confirms it was Kaleo, can Billy Harrington deal with him?” Chin asked, a hard edge to his voice.

“I can’t tell you that. You have to retain complete deniability,” Steve told him.

“Excellent,” Chin said with a satisfied nod.

“Then should you come golfing?” Danny asked.

“It’s just golf with some buddies,” Chin said innocently. Danny almost believed him even with knowing the truth.
Chapter Summary

Steve and Danny strengthen their friendship, in part by arguing about Ben & Jerry's ice cream.

_Grief knits two hearts in closer bonds than happiness ever can; and common sufferings are far stronger links than common joys._ ~Alphonse de Lamartine

Steve and Danny spent almost all their free time together, falling into a natural rhythm that was good for them both. Having a real friend to confide in was something they’d both needed, and they cherished that they’d found each other.

Steve refused to examine his good fortune too closely, afraid it would vanish like so many of the positives in his life had done. Danny also worried about being too happy, fearful his new sense of security would also be snatched away. They were both content to enjoy the time together, getting to really know each other, and agreed not too look too closely at their luck.

“Do you want to come to meet Stan with me?” Danny asked Steve Sunday afternoon. They’d both had appointments but agreed to meet for a beer at the bar close to Steve’s house. That would keep them out of bed and out of trouble.

“No,” Steve said. “You need the time with him.”

“All right,” Danny agreed easily. He understood what Steve meant. The pain he and Stan shared was not a part of the fabric of Steve’s life. That tear would never be mended for Danny or Stan.

“I accidentally double-booked Wednesday. Can you take one of them?” Steve asked.

“What time?” Danny said, taking out his phone.

“One’s at noon. The other’s at 12:30,” Steve said.

“Yeah. I can do either one,” Danny agreed. “Who you want me to take?”

“The 12:30 is the mayor’s wife,” Steve said. “She’s not a lot of work. Mostly she wants to be the center of someone’s attention for a couple of hours.”

“And the other one?”

“Ex-military. You’d probably hate him. If you don’t mind taking Sahara, I’ll take the noon.”

“Yeah. You soldiers should stick together,” Danny said, laughing behind his hand.

“Navy,” Steve hissed. “I was in the Navy.”
“Yes of course you were,” Danny said, patting him solicitously on the hand. That made Steve frown even harder although Danny hadn’t thought it was possible.

“Shut up,” Steve retorted, having no choice but to laugh. “I’ll call Sahara and let her know. She likes short men.”

“Then how’d she end up with you, Gigantor?”

“Sam,” Steve said simply. “She gets a room at the downtown Marriott. She’ll call you with the number.”

“Then you’ll see Sam?” Danny asked.

“Not this Wednesday. He’ll be in Washington.”

“Ohhh…” Danny said. “I happen to have an opening Wednesday night. And the Yankees are playing the loathed Red Sox.”

“I’m not flying to Boston,” Steve said, openly laughing at Danny.

“Tape the game for me or I swear I will make you regret it,” Danny warned.

“I don’t know why you think you can threaten me,” Steve said. “I can take you down without raising a sweat.”

“As I am all too aware, Ninja SEAL. However, if you don’t tape the game, you don’t get this delicious morsel in your bed for an entire week.

“More like an appetizer,” Steve said, sweeping Danny with his eyes.

“It’s a good thing I like your cooking,” Danny said.

“And my bed. And my shower.”

“And you,” Danny admitted, leaning closer to kiss him. “Most of all, you.”

“Yeah?” Steve said, a sparkle in his eyes.

“Yeah,” Danny sighed.

It wasn’t too much longer until Danny had to go and meet Stan. Steve went home, trying to keep busy. But in the short amount of time he’d known Danny, he’d grown accustom to having him around. The house was way too quiet without Danny’s constant talking following him.

A couple hours after they’d parted, Danny called him. He sounded…sad.

“You okay?” Steve asked. He was sitting in one of the beach chairs, listening to the soothing sounds of the waves.

“I will be,” Danny said. “It’s always hard.”
“I’m sorry.”

“I know,” Danny said, taking a deep breath. “Stan got us a tee time next Tuesday. We need to be there at 9:30. Do you have appropriate attire?”

“Yeah,” Steve said. “I won’t need cleats, will I?”


“Slippahs,” Steve corrected automatically.

“Doesn’t matter. You can’t wear them at the club. What if you run into a client?”

“We pretend we’ve never met,” Steve said. “That’s how we handle it.”

“Good,” Danny said.

“You coming over?”

“I’m going home,” Danny said. “I need some time…to sort stuff out.”

“All right,” Steve said. “If you change your mind, you have the key.”

“Yeah,” Danny said.

“I have four appointments tomorrow. I’ll be home late,” Steve said.

“I’ll sleep here,” Danny said. “I may not sleep.”

“You sure you won’t come tomorrow?” Steve asked in sympathy.

“I’m sure. I won’t be very good company. And I don’t want to try to be.”

“I understand,” Steve said. “Are you drinking?”

“No,” Danny assured him. “I am about to dive head first into a half gallon of Ben and Jerry’s chunky monkey.”

“Got to go Heath bar crunch. I’m telling you,” Steve insisted.

“No way. Chunky monkey’s number one. Phish food a close second.”

“Phish food is for losers. Cherry Garcia is the way to go.”

They spent the next few minutes arguing over the best ice cream flavors, Danny finally laughing.

“Thanks babe,” Danny said, warmth in his voice.

“You’re welcome. Call me tomorrow.”

“I will. ‘Night.”
“Good night Danny,” Steve said, ringing off.

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Steve didn’t see Danny again until he came over Wednesday for dinner and the game. Danny insisted on stopping for take-out, not wanting to take advantage of Steve’s hospitality. Steve said he didn’t mind but if Danny was sure, he’d love some Thai food. Danny assured him he’d stop at the right restaurant and would bring plenty of beer.

“You want to watch the game while we eat?” Steve asked when Danny let himself in.

“If you don’t mind,” Danny said, putting the bags and beer on the coffee table. “I need a quick shower.”


“Be back shortly,” Danny said, stopping to put up one finger in warning. “Don’t. Don’t go there.”

“You said it,” Steve said with a laugh.

Danny shook his head, sprinting up the steps with his gym bag. It didn’t take long for him to come back downstairs in a ratty tee shirt and sweatpants that had seen better days.

“Thank you for dressing up for me,” Steve said when Danny flopped onto the couch next to him.

“Anything for you, babe. You know that,” Danny said, leaning closer and stealing Steve’s chopsticks to eat from the container Steve was holding. “Fire up the game.”

“Yes sir. Right away sir,” Steve said, turning it on so Danny could alternate between yelling at his beloved Yankees and the hated Red Sox.

The Yankees managed to win, making Danny do a victory dance still sitting next to Steve.

“You are out of control,” Steve said, turning enough to kiss him.

“Wait until football season,” Danny warned with a wink.

“Giants or Jets?” Steve asked.

“Giants then Jets. I got a pass to the Pro-Bowl last year.”

“You were in your glory,” Steve guessed.

“Pretty much. Hawaii needs a baseball team.”

“I’ll mention that to Sam next Wednesday,” Steve suggested.

“Think you’ll still see him once he’s governor?” Danny asked. The elections were coming up and Governor Jameson had served as long as was permitted. It was a foregone conclusion that Sam would win the job.

“Doubt it. It’ll be harder for him to get away,” Steve said.
“Yeah,” Danny agreed, standing up to stretch and making sure his tee shirt rode up so Steve could enjoy the view. “You ready for bed, sailor?”

“I am,” Steve said, standing to go up with him. “You’re still coming over Friday, right?”

“That’s the plan. By the way, Sahara said to apologize but she prefers me.”

“I told you,” Steve said with a laugh. “Short men.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. We can’t all be giants,” Danny said as they stripped off their clothes. “She wanted to pay me your rates. I thought you’d adjusted yours to the same as mine.”

“Not with her. I keep my old rates for my original clients,” Steve said. “Did she pay your rate?”

“With a smile once I told her I wasn’t taking your cheap ass fee,” Danny said.

“My ass is not cheap, except for you,” Steve said, silencing anything else Danny may have had to say. It was hard to talk when someone else’s tongue was taking up all the room in your mouth.
Chapter Summary

Danny is hurt by a client and Steve insists on taking care of him – Danny and the client, but in very different ways. Danny accepts the first and declines the second.

*I don’t understand why prostitution is illegal. Selling is legal. Fucking is legal. Why isn’t selling fucking legal? You know, why should it be illegal to sell something that’s perfectly legal to give away? ~George Carlin

They talked on the phone the next day, only able to get in quick hellos before they had to return to see to the requirements of their clients.

Steve was surprised when Danny called Friday morning and said he needed to stay home. “What’s wrong?” Steve asked, on instant alert.

“Nothing,” Danny said, not very convincing in the lie.

“I’m on my way,” Steve said, hanging up so Danny couldn’t tell him not to come. Steve didn’t answer as he drove to Danny’s. He hadn’t been to his apartment but knew how to find it. It was in an area as run-down as Steve remembered. “Danny, it’s me,” he said as he’d banged on the door.

It only took a minute for Danny to unbolt and open the door. He looked tired and pale.

“What’s wrong?” Steve demanded, shouldering his way into Danny’s tiny apartment. “And don’t tell me nothing.”

Danny looked up at him before sighing and untying the string of his sweatpants. He let them drop, turning his back on Steve so he could see the strips of red crossing his ass and down onto his thighs.

“You don’t do that,” Steve said in anger.

“No,” Danny agreed, pulling up his pants before turning back to face Steve. “He didn’t ask. He handcuffs occasionally me but never for this before.”

“Handcuffs you,” Steve said, reaching for Danny’s hands. He could see the abrasions encircling his wrists. “Who was it?”

“I can’t tell you that,” Danny said, reaching up to smooth the anger lines from Steve’s face. “I’ll be fine. I’m a quick healer.”

“You are injured, Danny. This can’t go unanswered,” Steve insisted.

“Babe,” Danny said, leaning up against him to make sure he had his full attention. “I broke his nose once he finally released me. If he ever comes near me again, I’ll have him arrested for assault. And he knows I mean it.”
“You broke his nose?” Steve said, proud of Danny’s toughness.

“Yep. He’ll have to lie about what happened for the next few weeks. I already told Chin the truth. If it spreads through the precinct, well, it’s only what he deserves.”

“Good,” Steve said. “Come to my house. I have some numbing cream that will help.”

“How can I go anywhere when I can’t sit down?” Danny asked.

“You’ll fit in my backseat. And that’s not a crack about your height,” Steve promised.

“You’re not going to let me lick my wounds by myself, are you?” Danny asked in affectionate exasperation.

“Not a chance,” Steve said. “Bring clean clothes. You can’t work for the next few days.”

“All right,” Danny sighed, conceding to the inevitable.

“How many appointments do you have?” Steve asked as he followed Danny into his bedroom so he could put tee-shirts and sweatpants into his bag. Rather than answer, Danny handed over his cell phone. “I can take two tomorrow and one Sunday. You’ll have cancel the others.” They were both free on Tuesday, deciding that after the golf game they’d take the rest of the day off to be together.

“Right,” Danny said, looking around to see if there was anything else he needed.

“You have boardies?”

“Swim trunks?”

“Yes,” Steve said.

“I do. I know ocean water helps healing,” Danny said.

“It does,” Steve agreed, opening the front door so they could go to his truck. He had the back door open, waiting as Danny found the most comfortable way to lay. “Okay?”

“Fine,” Danny said, his head resting on his arm. “I’m fine.”

“Okay,” Steve said, climbing in to drive home. “Tell me who did this.”

“No,” Danny said in refusal. “You can’t do anything about it.”

“I’m going to ask Chin and he’ll tell me.”

“Steve,” Danny said sternly. “I have been fighting my own battles for a long time. I do not need you to rescue me.”

“I’m not trying to rescue you,” Steve said, glancing at Danny in the rearview mirror. “I want to make sure he knows to never do that to anyone else.”

“He knows. He definitely knows,” Danny said.
“Is there something special you want to eat?” Steve asked, letting it go for now. He planned to revisit the topic as soon as he got Chin on the phone.

“Advil and coffee,” Danny said, making Steve laugh.

“I have plenty of both.”

“This is the only reason I’m allowing you to kidnap me,” Danny claimed.

“That and my sparkling personality,” Steve said.

“You have a personality?” Danny asked in supposed surprise. “I had no idea.”

“Larger than life. Just like me,” Steve said. Danny could only shake his head at Steve’s words.

When they arrived at Steve’s, Danny was installed on the couch with a bell, the remote, and strict orders not to do anything but lay there and heal. Steve made him fresh coffee which he served with four Advil.

“You want pancakes?” Steve asked, sitting on the edge of the couch to smooth Danny’s ruffled hair.

“Not right now,” Danny said, his hand not clutching his coffee on Steve’s thigh. “Maybe when I wake up again.”

“Okay,” Steve said. He kissed Danny lightly on the lips before standing. “I’m on bathroom duty. Ring if you need anything.”

“I’m fine,” Danny said with silent amusement. “Go nuke some germs.”

“I plan to,” Steve said with a wink.

Steve checked on him periodically through the morning, finding him asleep half the times he breezed through the living room. He was about to make himself some lunch when Danny came limping into the kitchen.

“Hey,” Steve said, turning his full attention to Danny. He was looking better, not so pale. “Feeling better?”

“I think so?” Danny said. “I’ll know for sure once I’m awake.”

“I’m making BLTs. You want one?”

“Yeah,” Danny decided, looking out the kitchen window at the ocean. “Then we’ll go swimming?”

“Of course,” Steve agreed, putting four slices of bread in the toaster.

“Is that some kind of weird cracked barley and wild rice bread?” Danny asked refilling his coffee cup. He had no doubt the coffee was freshly made within the last five minutes.

“Wild rice?” Steve repeated, showing him the bread container. “It’s rye. Plain, everyday rye.”
"I can never be sure with you," Danny teased. "I’ve seen those God awful green smoothies you drink."

"Once a week. That’s all," Steve protested.

"Still God awful," Danny said. "Now, what did Chin say when you called him?"

"He said…wait. How’d you know I called him? You couldn’t have heard me."

"Babe," Danny said with a knowing smile.

"He said it’s being handled."

Steve seemed satisfied with Chin’s assurances, which Danny hoped meant he wouldn’t try to do anything about it himself. "Did he tell you who did it?" Danny asked.

"No. Said I didn’t need to be involved," Steve said.

"Good," Danny agreed. "Did you cancel my appointments?"

"No. I was pretty sure you wouldn’t appreciate it," Steve admitted.

"You were correct," Danny said with a laugh. "I’ll do it after we swim."

Steve got the bacon out of the microwave when the toast popped up, fixing the two sandwiches. He leaned against the cabinet next to Danny. If Danny couldn’t sit, Steve wasn’t going to either.

Once they’d finished their lunch, Steve ran upstairs and put on his boardies. Danny changed in the downstairs bath, catching a glimpse of his red and bruised ass. It was worse than he’d thought. At least none of the strikes had broken the skin. Still, as soon as the guy’s nose healed, Danny was busting it again.

"Danny?" Steve said right outside the bathroom.

Danny opened the door to leave before Steve broke down the door to get to him. "I’m right here."

"You ready?" Steve asked, looking down at him with such affection Danny momentarily got lost in it. "Danny?"

"Huh?"

"You ready?" Steve repeated with a smile.

"Yeah, yeah I’m ready," Danny said, taking one of the towels from Steve.

They spent a very pleasant hour in the ocean, Steve finding a couple of rafts they could laze on. Danny would have stayed even longer but he hadn’t put on sunscreen and he didn’t need a sunburn to accompany his caned ass. He still couldn’t believe it happened to him. He’d known the cop that had done it since he’d moved to the islands. He was apparently having a hard time at home from what Chin said. Didn’t make it okay that he took his frustration out on Danny’s ass.

They took a shower after they’d waded to shore, Steve carefully spreading the cream on Danny’s
bruised flesh. The welts looked less swollen than they had earlier which reassured Steve.

“You want to nap up here?” Steve asked when Danny’s ass was thoroughly coated.

“No. I’ll come back down,” Danny said.

“Okay. You need something to drink,” Steve said as they went to the living room.

“Water’s fine. I’ll have a beer tonight. But I don’t want to mix it with Advil. Does weird things to my stomach.”

“Water it is,” Steve said as Danny lay face down on the couch. It didn’t take long for him to return with an icy glass and a couple more Advil. “Will you be able to golf with us on Tuesday?”

“I should be,” Danny said. “I checked my ass when I was changing. It looks worse than I thought.”

“I told you,” Steve said, sitting on the edge of the couch. “Who did it?”

“I’m not telling you. You need to stop asking,” Danny said firmly. “And don’t pout. You’re a SEAL for God’s sake. You do not get to pout.”

“I thought it was worth a try,” Steve said, picking up the remote. “Did you watch the baseball game?”

“No. I wanted to wait for you since they’re playing the Orioles. I know they are as close to a home team as you get.”

“So you want me to root for the Os so you can razz me if the Yankees manage to win.”

“When the Yankees win,” Danny corrected.

“We’ll see,” Steve said, turning on the game.

“You want to put your money where your mouth is?” Danny said, taunting him because he could.

“Sure. How about a hundred bucks?”

“You’re on. Hope you have it in one of your copious pockets. In four hours, it will be mine.”

“We’ll see,” Steve said, settling at the end of the couch, Danny’s feet in his lap.

The Orioles not only won but outscored the Yankees by six runs. Danny claimed he didn’t have $100 with him and Steve would just have to wait. Steve warned that he wasn’t about to forget that Danny owed him.

“I’m sure you won’t,” Danny said with a laugh.

“You hungry?” Steve asked. It had gotten late enough for dinner without either of them noticing.

“Not really,” Danny said. “Do you have any of that horrible Cherry Garcia you love so much?”

“Maybe,” Steve said, getting up. “Chocolate syrup?”
“Absolutely,” Danny agreed, turning on his side to wait. It didn’t take long for Steve to return with two big bowls filled with ice cream, syrup, whipped cream and a cherry. “I love whipped cream.”

“I love licking up whipped cream,” Steve said practically making love to his spoon.

“Once I’m healed, you can demonstrate,” Danny said, mesmerized by the show Steve was putting on for him.

“I’ll be glad to,” Steve said. “That will be another $100.”

“That your friends and family discount?”

“Family discount?” Steve said wrinkling his nose.

“Stop. You know exactly what I mean,” Danny said, thumping him on the arm with his spoon. “You know what else I’d like to do once I’m better?”

“What’s that?” Steve asked, eating more of his ice cream.

“I want to take some photos of you. I’ve been told I have an eye for it.”

“Okay,” Steve agreed. “Nudes?”

“God yes,” Danny said.

“Fine by me,” Steve said. “Do we need to rent a studio?”

“We can do some on the beach,” Danny said. “Are both of the other bedrooms furnished?”

“Yeah,” Steve said, considering it. “I can empty out the one that used to be my sister’s. She won’t care. We could set up a studio there if you want.”

“I’d like that, if you’re sure you don’t mind,” Danny said.

“I don’t. I’d prefer you didn’t bring anyone else here though.”

“I don’t plan to, babe. Just you. And maybe some fruit and vegetables.”

“Still lifes?”

“Yeah,” Danny said. “I know it sounds boring but apparently when I photograph them they turn out looking phallic.”

“That’s good to know,” Steve said.

“Everything looks phallic to you,” Danny accused, making Steve laugh.

“That a problem?”

“Not for me,” Danny assured him. “Do you use toys?”
“I try not to,” Steve said. “A couple of clients like to. I charge extra when they insist.”

“Why do you object?”

Steve shrugged, considering the question as he ate more ice cream. “I don’t really know, to be honest. I think it’s because it seems remote. Like they don’t want to touch me so they use silicone instead.”

“Hmm…” Danny said.

“You? You allow it?”

“I don’t really care,” Danny said. “I own quite a few. I won’t ever use theirs. If they have one they want to use on me, they have to order a new one.”

“That’s a good policy,” Steve said. “I can’t be restrained.”

“Causes flashbacks?”

“It can,” Steve said. “I can be told to lay still. As long as they don’t tie me, it’s fine.”

“I can understand that,” Danny said. “I don’t really like being restrained but it doesn’t bother me especially. Although now I may have to think twice before I agree. Anything else you keep off limits?”

“Nothing so far,” Steve said. “They can’t come here and they can’t restrain me. There isn’t anything else I out-right refuse. You?”

“I hate games. I’m already a hooker. Is it really necessary for me to pretend to be a pizza delivery guy too?” Danny frowned when Steve laughed. “What? You play hot waiter for your clients?”

“No one’s asked me,” Steve said. “Although I had a couple of people request I wear my uniform. I told them no.”

“That’s disrespectful, isn’t it?”

“I thought it was. If they want to buy me surplus fatigues, I’d do it. But I couldn’t wear my uniform even if I wanted to. I turned them all in.”

“Why’s that?” Danny asked. He knew most ex-military kept theirs for special occasions and formal events.

Steve was silent for several minutes and Danny almost told him to forget he’d asked. Before he could, Steve tried to explain. “I didn’t belong in that world any longer,” Steve said thoughtfully. “Once I decided to leave, I needed to sever all ties. I felt like keeping my uniforms would seem… indecisive. Like I was holding onto them in case I changed my mind.”

“Did you keep the medals?”

“They are in a safe deposit box. What else was I going to do with them?”

“I’m sorry, babe,” Danny said.
“You have no reason to be. I don’t regret my years of service.”

“I don’t regret being a policeman,” Danny said in agreement. “But I can’t ever see myself going back to it.”

“Yeah,” Steve said. “When you were fired, did you lose your pension?”

“No,” Danny said. “They allowed me to keep it. I think they were afraid I’d sue them. I should have been granted more bereavement leave. They made me come back almost right away, citing personnel shortages. I consulted a lawyer after I was fired who said my drinking could be linked directly to lack of support. That scared the precinct enough that I kept my pension and they paid my medical insurance for an entire year.”

“You have insurance now?” Steve asked.

“Yeah. I pay an arm and a leg for it,” Danny said.

“Me too,” Steve said. “We need to start a hooker union.”

“I wish,” Danny said. “Is there one in Las Vegas?”

“No idea. I never hired one. Becoming one was my first experience with it,” Steve said, Danny laughing with him. “You?”

“I never hired one,” Danny said. “I used to arrest them…us…whatever. Never quite understood why it’s illegal. It’s a private transaction between two consenting adults.”

“Unless the hooker’s underage,” Steve suggested.

“We aren’t. Don’t see how the law gets to decide what we do with our bodies. They couldn’t stop us from…I don’t know… selling a kidney.”

“That is illegal.”

“Okay. But we could give them away. And having sex without exchanging money isn’t illegal. Why does paying make it so wrong?”

“No idea,” Steve said.

“I think I’m ready for bed,” Danny decided, giving his empty bowl to Steve.

“Me too,” Steve said. “I have an appointment at 7:30. I’ll try not to wake you when I leave.”

“Doesn’t matter,” Danny said. “I’ll go back to sleep.”

“As I’ve learned,” Steve said.

They went straight to sleep, Danny not able to do anything much more than lay on his stomach after Steve reapplied the soothing cream.
A Golf Game and A Mystery

Chapter Summary

Steve, Danny, and Chin go golfing with Stan. It has interesting and unexpected consequences.

_Golf and sex are the only things you can enjoy without being good at them._ ~Jimmy DeMaret

Danny stayed at Steve’s house even though Steve was gone most of the time. Steve managed to get home Monday night before midnight, the first night he’d gotten home that early since Danny had been injured. He wanted to make sure he was ready for the meeting with Tua on Tuesday morning.

They decided that they’d go by Danny’s early Tuesday morning so he could change. On Monday night, his ass was still sore but he was able to sit up for a couple of hours. He told Steve he’d be fine riding the golf cart and as soon as their golf outing was over, he’d go home and put on more cream.

“By go home, you mean come back here,” Steve said as he lay curled around Danny.

“No, I mean I’ll go home. I’ve been here long enough.”

“Long enough for what?” Steve asked.

Danny sighed, shaking his head at the other man’s stubbornness.

“Seriously. What do you have to go home to? Beside counting the cockroaches and listening to Mr. and Mrs. Too Fucking Loud?” Steve asked.

“Stop,” Danny said, burying his fingers in Steve’s hair. “I’m going home.”

“All right,” Steve conceded, kissing Danny. “You promise that….”

“Yes, I promise if I need anything I’ll call you,” Danny finished for him.

“I can’t help but worry,” Steve said.

“I know, babe. But I’m a grown man who has been taking care of himself for a long time,” Danny pointed out.

Steve kissed him again before closing his eyes. If his arms were just a little tighter around Danny, Danny wasn’t going to say anything about it.

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They arrived at the country club at 9:30 Tuesday morning, Stan waiting for them right outside the
clubhouse. Steve was wearing a pair of khakis, which Danny had insisted on ironing, along with Steve’s aqua blue polo. It was one of Danny’s favorite shirts on him and knew it’d distract anyone who got too curious.

Danny was wearing knee length golf shorts in a subtle dark blue and green plaid. His blue polo matched exactly, as did his socks. Stan was dressed much like Danny although Danny was sure Stan’s outfit cost three times what his did and he hadn’t gone cheap when he’d bought his. Well, Stan was a millionaire from ‘legitimate’ business interests. Danny didn’t have any need to try to keep up with him.

“Danny,” Stan said, grasping his hand in a warm handshake.

“Thanks again for having us,” Danny said. “Stan, this is Steve. Steve, Stan.”

“It’s good to meet you,” Steve said, shaking Stan’s hand and appreciating his firm grasp.

“Nice meeting you as well,” Stan said, accessing Steve. He apparently approved of what he found, nodding once.

“Chin Ho Kelly will be here shortly,” Danny told Stan.

“It will be good to see him again,” Stan said.

“He said the same,” Danny agreed, watching as Chin rode up on his motorcycle. He parked it with the other bikes, unstrapping his clubs from the back. His golf bag was zipped closed, ensuring he didn’t spread his clubs all over Oahu as he made his way to the course.

“Stan,” Chin said, shaking hands with him. “I’ve been looking forward to playing with you for a long time.”

“Same here,” Stan said with a wide, gleaming white smile. “You haven’t aged a day since the last time I saw you.”

“How long has it been?” Steve asked.

“A couple of years,” Chin said. What he didn’t say was that the last time he’d seen Stan had been at the funeral. That was a subject that didn’t need to be brought up.

Stan escorted them inside, taking them to the course office to register. It took only a few minutes for them to fill out the paperwork and have their tee time confirmed.

“Would you like some coffee before we go out?” Stan asked after looking at his far too expensive watch. They agreed they would like a cup and went with Stan to the member-only dining room. They had barely sat down before a waiter approached with a carafe, filling the four cups and asking if there was anything else he could get for them. After Stan assured him they were all set, he returned to his station, watching so he could anticipate their needs before they realized what they were.

At 9:50, Stan said they needed to go and get their carts, then head out to the course. Tua would be one hole ahead of them but it wouldn’t take long for them to catch up. Stan hadn’t seen him when he got to the Club but there was no doubt Tua would be on the course.

It took four holes until they caught up with Tua’s foursome. They hadn’t rushed their games, Stan by
far the best of the three golfers. Steve gave much unsolicited advice, most of which was studiously ignored by those golfing. They did all laugh at him, and each other, especially when the balls didn’t do as required.

Stan led Danny, Steve, and Chin toward the hole where Tua was getting ready to tee off. He was accompanied by an older man with very little hair, a slender man about his own age with an unpleasant expression, and a woman in a pretty blue sundress with a matching wide brim hat who was not pretending to golf.

“This can’t be a coincidence,” Tua said when he saw the four men approaching.

“We are only here to ask you a question,” Steve said, hoping his tone was reconciliatory. He knew that the older man was Hiro Noshimuri, local head of the Yakuzas. He thought the woman was his wife but wasn’t entirely sure. He didn’t know the other man although he looked vaguely familiar. He was certain he had no desire to start any kind of war on the golf course. He wasn’t looking to take anyone down. He glanced at Chin who looked like a man out having fun on the golf course. Steve didn’t know if Chin worked undercover but if he didn’t, the HPD was wasting a valuable asset.

“You could have called me,” Tua said, addressing Steve after a quick assessment of the other men.

“Wasn’t sure you’d take my call,” Steve said.

“What is it you want?” Tua prompted. He didn’t sound angry. Mostly he sounded curious. Steve considered that an excellent sign.

“Do you know Danny Williams?” Steve asked, nodding toward Danny.

“I know of him,” Tua said, meeting Danny’s eyes. “I know he’s been through hard times.”

“We want to know if you know who actually stole the money from the evidence locker,” Steve said.

“I know it wasn’t Detective Williams,” Tua said.

“Was it Detective Kaleo?” Steve asked.

“What are you going to do with the information?” Hiro Noshimuri asked. His tone echoed Tua’s – curiosity and nothing more.

“Have him taken out,” Steve said evenly.

Hiro glanced at Tua who shrugged.

“He’s a dreadful man,” the woman said, studying her manicure before glancing up at Hiro. “This attractive young man is wiling to get rid of one of your problems, love. I say let him.”

“Tua?” Hiro said. The third man with the unpleasant experience was watching the conversation but did not seem involved in the decision.

Tua nodded.

“Thank you,” Steve said, turning to go back to the carts.
“McGarrett,” Tua said, stopping Steve who looked over his shoulder. “The information squares our debt. What you do with it is up to you.”

“Understood,” Steve agreed, resuming the walk with Stan, Chin, and Danny to the carts.

“What do we do now?” Chin asked. “Wait for them to finish? Go to the next hole?”

“Doesn’t much matter,” Stan said.

“I’m ready to leave,” Danny admitted. “We have what we came for.”

“The course sure is fine,” Chin said wistfully.

“You stay and finish,” Steve said. “Danny and I are going to go.”

“That works for me,” Stan agreed. “You can practice your putting.”

Chin laughed and nodded. “Sounds good. I don’t want to know anything about what you do once you leave here.”

“Understood,” Steve said, getting behind the wheel of the golf cart. “Thank you, Stan.”

“You’re welcome,” Stan said. “I’ll call you soon, Danny.”

“Please do,” Danny agreed. He gave a jaunty wave before holding on tightly as Steve drove way too fast down the cart path. “For God’s sake, babe. This isn’t the Daytona 500. 10 miles an hour. The speed limit is 10. Miles. Per. Hour. How are you even making the cart go this fast? Did you ninja off the governor when I wasn’t looking?”

Steve laughed at him as he continued to drive too fast but very carefully. “Come to my house for lunch.”

“Yeah, all right. Lunch. Then I’m going home,” Danny insisted.

“Okay,” Steve said, thinking of all the ways he could prevent Danny from leaving after they ate. He had gotten Chunky Monkey and stashed it in the freezer. That was good for at least an hour. And maybe he could talk Danny into swimming again. The ocean water did help with heal Danny’s very nice ass.

“Are you calling Billy?” Danny asked after they returned the cart to the valet.

“When we get to my house,” Steve said. “Or maybe tomorrow. I don’t want Kaleo taken out right away. Could look bad for Chin.”

“Yeah,” Danny agreed. “Maybe…I don’t know…”

“What?” Steve asked as they went toward Steve’s truck.

“Does he deserve to die for what he did?” Danny asked thoughtfully.

“Babe,” Steve said, not starting the truck in order to look over at Danny. “He ruined your life. He is working for a known drug lord. There’s little doubt he’s into things we don’t have a clue about.”
“Yeah,” Danny said, looking out his window. “Maybe Billy could threaten him first.”

“Is that what you really want?” Steve would wait as Danny considered it. The ultimate decision had to be his.

“Police protect and serve. We don’t have the right to be judge, jury, and executioner,” Danny said, looking back at Steve. Steve could barely stand to see Danny’s expression looking so conflicted and so miserable.

“You aren’t a policeman any longer, babe. And that’s squarely on Kaleo’s shoulders.”


“Two of my closest friends for a while.”

Danny sighed. He simply didn’t know what he wanted to happen next. He confessed as much to Steve.

“We know the truth now,” Steve said, starting his truck. “You can decide if or when we tell Billy.”

“All right,” Danny said. “You don’t think I’m… well… you know.”

“I don’t know,” Steve said, glancing at him. “Tell me.”

“That I’m squeamish. That I wouldn’t kill if I had to.”

“Of course I don’t think of your sense of fairness as a weakness. Killing in conflict is one thing. Condemning a man to die is different,” Steve said.

“Yeah. If it were kill or be killed, I’d pull the trigger. Putting a contract on someone who ruined my life feels different.”

“I get that,” Steve said.

“Did you know Tua and Hiro Noshimuri were tight?” Danny asked.

“I’d heard. I feel like I should know the third man but I can’t place him.”

“His name is Wo Fat,” Danny said. “He has at least one tentacle in almost all the illegal activities on the islands. He was probably trying to secure a bigger stake in Noshimuri’s and Tua’s.”

“Wo Fat,” Steve repeated. “I’ve heard that name before. How did he get slices of all the pies?”

“It’s said he kills for what he wants. Not that it makes him so different from the others. But he’s especially ruthless. And he has a small army that works for him.”

“That doesn’t sound like someone Tua would be in bed with,” Steve said. “Tua focuses on cocaine for the most part. Noshimuri is convenient because he controls a lot of the docks.”

“All I know is that people who cross Wo Fat don’t live long enough to regret it.”
“That’s good intel. I’ll have to make sure Billy knows,” Steve said. “Do I need to stop for anything for you to eat?”

“No,” Danny said. “There are still the makings for BLTs. You fry some excellent bacon.”

“I can microwave like a pro,” Steve agreed with a laugh.

When they got to Steve’s they went swimming, Danny glad to be able to put on his looser, more comfortable swim shorts.

“It doesn’t matter how many time you ‘correct’ me,” Danny said using air quotes to emphasize the uselessness of Steve telling him they were not swim trunks in Hawaii. “I will not call them boardies. That implies surfboards. I do not surf.”

“I’ll teach you,” Steve said, trying to keep the laughter out of his voice. He’d succeeded in giving Danny a real head of steam and leaned back in his beach chair to enjoy the show.

“No. No thank you. I do not have any desire to kill myself on a slab of wood,” Danny said.

“Fiberglass,” Steve corrected, making Danny frown even harder at him.


“Feel strongly about this, do you?” Steve asked.

“Didn’t you say something about feeding me? Or do you always let your guest slowly starve on your beach? Is the ocean supposed to distract me from the gnawing hunger that is even now trying to eat me alive?”

“What?” Steve said, blinking owlishly up at him.

“Come inside with me and feed me,” Danny said, enunciating each word clearly and turning to go toward the house.

Steve stood to press himself up against Danny’s back, wrapping his long, warm arms around Danny. He placed kisses on the freckles on Danny’s shoulders as he caressed the plentiful hair on his chest. “I’d rather eat you,” he whispered into Danny’s ear. That earned him a whole body shudder.

“Uhn…” Danny groaned, backing up to grind against Steve’s erection. “I’m hungry,” he tried. But he couldn’t put any force in the words.

“I’ll distract you. Then I’ll make you lunch,” Steve promised, slipping his hand under the waistband of Danny’s shorts. “You can’t tell me you aren’t interested.” Danny’s erection being fisted by Steve was proof enough of Danny’s interest in Steve’s idea.

“Oh babe,” Danny sighed, turning in Steve’s arms so that Steve could kiss him. “Okay, yeah. Let’s have dessert before lunch.”

“Done,” Steve agreed, hurrying Danny up to the house. As soon as they entered the sunroom, Steve crowded Danny up against the nearest wall, consuming Danny’s mouth. While he was taking all of Danny’s oxygen, he was also untying his swim trunks. Steve let them drop, looking down at Danny’s hard cock when Danny had to turn his head to breathe.
“This, this is a beautiful thing,” Steve said, grasping Danny’s erection. Still staring at his prize, he lowered himself to his knees, looking up through his eyelashes. One swipe of his tongue and Danny was gasping for air all over again.

“Come on, come on,” Danny chanted, one hand in Steve’s still wet hair. The other was holding onto Steve’s shoulder. He was afraid he’d collapse if he didn’t use Steve as a sturdy prop to remain upright.

“So impatient,” Steve said, blowing across the wet tip. “And so beautiful.”

“Less talk. This was your idea. Get with it,” Danny said, thrusting out his hips in encouragement. Steve smirked up at him while letting Danny into his sinfully talented mouth. “Oh Jesus. That’s more like it. Yes, babe, just like that.” Danny kept up a string of dirty talk that was hot enough to almost get Steve off without being touched. “Goin’ come, babe. Goin’ come and fill your mouth and throat,” Danny moaned, doing as he had warned. Steve swallowed it all, not wanting it to end. The salt from Danny’s come mixed with the salt from the ocean and Steve didn’t think he’d ever tasted anything sweeter.

“Oh babe,” Danny moaned as he melted down the wall. He stared at Steve through squinting eyes, barely able to focus on anything but the pleasure still coursing through his veins. “You broke me again.”

“Good,” Steve said, shifting so he was sitting on the floor pressed up close to Danny.

“How can I repay you?” Danny asked, lolling his head to the side to look at Steve.

Steve looked down at his tented boardies, wondering what he did want. That he was aroused was clear. But he wasn’t all that anxious for it to be dealt with. “I have no idea,” Steve said.

“Mmm…” Danny hummed. “Post coital indecisiveness.”

“It isn’t post coital for me. All I got was a mouthful of come,” Steve claimed.

“Uh huh,” Danny said, tutting in mock sympathy. “It was your idea you know.”

“Didn’t hear you protest,” Steve reminded him.

“Never would. Get yourself off. Let me watch,” Danny said, staring down at Steve’s crotch in hunger.

“I need a towel,” Steve said.

“Good God. You are such a clean freak. You’ll swallow mine but you’re worried about yours getting on your floor.”

“It’s sticky,” Steve pointed out. “Have you ever tried mopping it up?”

“Huh,” Danny said. “I guess I haven’t.” Danny untangled his shorts from his feet, handing them over to Steve. “Between mine and yours, it shouldn’t get on the floor.”

Steve took his shorts off, laying them on top of Danny’s between his spread thighs. That done, he
grasped his own erection, stroking it the way he enjoyed the most. A couple of clients had asked to watch and he’d made sure they had plenty of time to enjoy the show. Left to his own devices, he could come fairly quickly and without a sound. Living in barracks taught expediency and silence.

“Why’s your face all screwed up?” Danny asked in a soft voice. “Are you hurting yourself?”

Steve shook his head, reaching for one of Danny’s hands. Steve wrapped his hand around Danny’s, stroking himself in their combined fists. “Better,” Steve said.

“You were missing me?” Danny asked, kissing the top of his head. “You like my fingers intertwined with yours? You like that we’re both touching you and stroking you?” Danny continued to talk to him in the same warm tone until Steve spurted over his stomach and down onto the waiting shorts. “Nice. Really, really nice.”

“Thank you,” Steve whispered, reaching over to kiss him.

“Do you have to remember to make noise for the ones who want to hear you?” Danny asked as Steve recovered in a boneless heap of arms and legs.

“Yeah,” Steve said. “When you sleep five feet from the rest of your team, being quiet is the only way you can do it.”

“I can imagine,” Danny said, slowly standing and reaching down a hand. “Come on, SEAL boy. Let’s go take a shower so you can feed me.”

“Yep,” Steve agreed, stopping by the laundry room to put their shorts in the washer before going up to shower.

After they were out and dried off, Steve put the cream on Danny’s ass. The welts had gone down considerably and the bruising wasn’t nearly as angry. Danny said it was still tender but nothing like it had been.

“Are you seeing clients tomorrow?” Steve asked as they went down to the kitchen.

“Two. Sahara and a cop buddy. Not the one who did this to me,” Danny hastened to assure him.

“Does Sahara know about your ass?” Steve asked.

“She will at 12:30 tomorrow. Not like it will interfere. Like you said, mostly she wants to be the center of my world for two hours. I’m going to stop and get her chocolate covered strawberries. She said they were her favorites.”

“That’s an excellent idea,” Steve agreed. “I don’t know why she stays with him. He doesn’t deserve her.”

“I think he has ambitions to be governor. She’d like to be first lady of the state. Does he know she hires us?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t ask. She doesn’t have a paying job. She has to get the money from him directly or indirectly,” Steve said.

“He probably does know. He’s such an egotistical ass he’s probably glad he doesn’t have to see to
her needs.”

“You’re probably right,” Steve agreed, putting the bread in the toaster.

“How many do you have tomorrow?” Danny asked.

“Two. One at breakfast and Sam at 9:00,” Steve said.

“Are you going to tell Sam what we found out?” Danny asked, wondering whether or not telling the lieutenant governor was a good idea.

“I don’t know,” Steve admitted. “It’s information he should have. Except how can he use it without admitting where he got it?”

“Right. Can’t see him calling the police chief and saying ‘My hooker said to watch Kaleo. And Wo Fat may be in bed with Tua. Not literally. Although I am in bed with the person who told me.’”

“Not a conversation he wants to have,” Steve agreed. “Chin could tell him.”

“There is that,” Danny said.

“I’ll tell Sam he needs to talk to Chin. Then they can make whatever law enforcement decisions they think are best.”

“That’ll do it,” Danny agreed. “And you’ll tell Billy.”

“I will,” Steve agreed. “I’ll tell him to wait before taking any action against Kaleo.”

“Thanks,” Danny said. “I guess I owe Kaleo. If he hadn’t stolen the money, I’d have never met you.”

“Are you getting all mushy on me?” Steve teased, giving Danny a sloppy kiss.

“Stop. You’re worse than a dog,” Danny protested, not trying at all to get away.

“I do it doggie style. Maybe that’s why,” Steve said, kissing him again.

“Your brain is not right.”

Steve laughed. It felt good to laugh again. He thought he might have lost the ability but Danny was showing him he still could. One more reason to be grateful that Danny had barged into his life. Well, maybe the barging was mutual. Hardly mattered. All that mattered was that they had come together.

Danny left after they finished eating. Steve tried to talk him into staying but Danny insisted it was time to go home. They made plans to have a late dinner Wednesday, Danny inviting Steve over for some homemade spaghetti sauce.

Steve managed to keep busy, going for another swim. Being in the water was always good for him, the world disappearing as he concentrated on kicking, breathing, propelling himself forward.

When he was wading to shore, he was surprised to find Billy Harrington standing on his beach waiting for him. He hadn’t called Billy. He’d gone swimming as soon as Danny left, intending to call
once he’d finished his swim.

“Billy,” Steve said. He took the towel from Billy when he’d picked it up from the back of the chair. It was warm from the sun and smelled like Danny. Steve nearly smiled at that but didn’t want to have to explain to Billy.

“You’ve been busy,” Billy said, shoving his hands in the pockets of his dress trousers.

“I’ve been swimming,” Steve said, studying Billy. He was a man with something on his mind, something unpleasant from his downturned mouth and narrowed eyes.

“Still plenty of time for you to muck around places you don’t need to be,” Billy said.

“Such as?” Steve asked, throwing the towel over one shoulder as he watched Billy consider his next words.

“Why did you meet with Hiro Noshimuri this morning?”

“I have no interest in Hiro Noshimuri,” Steve said.

“Then why did you meet with him?”

“What business is that of yours?” Steve asked, straightening a little more. Billy was a little taller than Steve and was accustom to using his height to intimidate people when he needed the extra leverage. It was not going to work on Steve.

“That’s not any of your business,” Billy said. “If you know what’s smart, you’ll stay clear of him.”

“Did Noshimuri send you?”

“An interested party asked me to make sure you steer clear,” Billy said.

“Would that party be Wo Fat?” Steve asked. Billy didn’t react to that question so Steve felt fairly confident that it hadn’t been Wo Fat that was using Billy as he errand boy.

“Never heard of him,” Billy said.

“I had planned to call and tell you that Noshimuri, Tua, and Wo Fat might be combining resources. But I’m guessing you already know that.”

“Tua and Noshimuri?” Billy repeated. He could not stop the surprise from showing at that news.

“I went to talk to Tua this morning. Noshimuri was golfing with him. I know who he is but I have no business with him. I’d never spoken to him before this morning,” Steve informed him.

“You went to see Tua,” Billy repeated.

“I needed a favor,” Steve said, shrugging it off as not terribly important. “Noshimuri was with him. That’s the extent of our interactions.”

“Did Tua agree to your favor?”
“Who told you to warn me away from Noshimuri?” Steve asked, studying Billy and daring him to lie to his face.

“I’m not at liberty to say,” Billy told him. “It’s good advice.”

“It’s a moot point. I didn’t go to the Club to talk to Noshimuri. I don’t plan to ever speak with him again.”

“Keep it that way,” Billy said in warning.

“And if I don’t?” Steve asked. He had no intentions of talking with the Yakuza boss but if someone wanted to keep him away from Noshimuri, there must be a good reason. He’d need to find out what that reason was and who wanted to keep them apart.

“Don’t go there, McGarrett. You can only count on our friendship to go so far.”

“I think we burned that bridge already. You lit the first match. And unless you tell me who gave you this warning, I’m inclined to ignore your advice.”

Billy turned on his heel and left the beach. Once Steve heard his car pull out of the drive, he called Danny. “Billy Harrington just paid me a visit,” Steve said, settling in his beach chair.

“He come because you called?” Danny asked. He sounded half asleep and Steve felt bad for waking him up. But he could have ignored the call if he didn’t want to talk to Steve.

“I didn’t call him. He was bringing me a message,” Steve said, repeating what Billy had said.

“Well,” Danny said, considering this news. “How could you possibly pose a threat to Hiro Noshimuri?”

“I don’t know. You kill one mob boss and the whole island stops trusting you,” Steve said, making Danny laugh.

“You didn’t tell Billy about Kaleo I take it.”

“No,” Steve agreed. “If you decide you want him taken out, we’ll have to find a different way.”

“Yeah,” Danny said. “You tell Chin?”

“Not yet. I’ll call him as soon as we’re done. Billy said he’s never heard of Wo Fat.”

“Do you believe him?”

“He wasn’t lying about it,” Steve said. “I can’t figure who sent Billy. Tua wouldn’t have. And I’m no threat to Noshimuri. Billy thought I’d gone to speak to Hiro.”

“Someone has their facts scrambled,” Danny said. “We barely spoke to Noshimuri.”

“That’s what I told Billy,” Steve said.

“Maybe your reputation has grown in the retelling. Somebody told somebody who told somebody you were there. Now it’s gotten to the point that you went to the golf course to gun down
“Maybe,” Steve said. “Billy wouldn’t tell me who sent him.”

“Someone who thinks you’re after Noshimuri.”

“Which I’m not. Who the hell knows.”

“Right,” Danny said. “Call Chin. And I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Right,” Steve said, disconnecting. The mystery of Billy’s visit was still confusing to him but he refused to spend any more time considering the source of Billy’s misinformation.

He called Chin and told him that Billy had stopped by. Chin agreed he’d talk to Denning if he chose to call Chin. It had to be his choice. Steve agreed with the wisdom of Chin’s plan.
Chapter Summary

Steve makes decisions. Danny tries to protest. It’s useless.

*Life is the sum of all your choices. ~Albert Camus*

Steve got to Danny’s apartment at 11:00 the next night. He’d hoped to arrive earlier but Sam was in an extremely talkative mood. Steve didn’t mind being a sounding-board for him, and Sam had listened intently to everything Steve told him about Kaleo, and about Billy stopping by. Sam readily agreed to call Chin, to talk to him officially. He concurred that getting information from a hooker was not considered the most reliable of sources. Nor was he anxious to admit to the police chief that he hired one, what with it being illegal.

Steve knocked and entered. Danny had given him a key almost as soon as they got involved. He was greeted with the delicious smell of homemade sauce and garlic bread fresh from the oven.

“Hi honey. I’m here,” Steve called out unnecessarily.

“So I see,” Danny agreed. He pressed himself firmly against Steve’s body to smile up at him. “I happen to have some extra food. Would you be interested?” Danny asked, his hand slipping under Steve’s tee shirt.

“Not if you keep touching me like that,” Steve warned, kissing Danny before he could respond. They continued to kiss until there was a loud banging and even louder yelling from next door. “Really? Can’t Mr. and Mrs. Too Fucking Loud see we are trying to be romantic?”

“They wouldn’t care. They only have one volume,” Danny said in exasperation. “Come eat.”

“Absolutely,” Steve agreed, following Danny to his table where he’d put out a couple of candles. “Nice.”

“Thanks,” Danny said. His warm smile crinkled the corners of his eyes in the way Steve loved to see the most. The plate of food Danny put down in front of Steve distracted him momentarily from admiring the view of Danny in his jeans and apron.

Steve gave a start when more loud banging came from the adjacent apartment. “Un-fucking-believable.”

“Right?” Danny said. “It’s constant with them. I’ve complained. The other neighbors have complained. Landlord says he can’t do anything because noise isn’t illegal.”

“Move in with me,” Steve said as he took a huge bite of spaghetti.

Danny continued to eat as though Steve hadn’t said anything. He’d learned that sometimes ignoring Steve was the only way to deal with him. It never worked out as well as Danny hoped but it was
worth a try this time. What Steve had said was preposterous. Yeah, ignoring him was for the best.

“Do you want some more bread?” Danny asked, handing Steve the basket.

“Don’t pretend you didn’t hear what I said,” Steve said, accepting the bread even so. “You need to move in with me.”

“Babe,” Danny said, shaking his head. “Must you do everything at super sonic speed?”

“I don’t,” Steve protested even though he acknowledged to himself that Danny was right. Didn’t matter. “You spend more time at my house than you do here. This apartment is a little slice of hell.”

“It’s my own little slice of hell,” Danny pointed out.

“Oh. You don’t want to move into my house,” Steve said.

“We’re both set in our ways,” Danny said. “We’d end up hating each other.”

“That would never happen.”

“Not until I forgot to run the dishwasher one too many times or you tracked more sand in than I could stand. We’d be at each other’s throats.”

“No we wouldn’t,” Steve said. “You were at my house for five days and we were fine.”

“Four and a half days. That’s a lot different from permanently,” Danny said.

“What about this? What about if I clean out my old room? It can be your bedroom, office, whatever. That way if you need alone time, you’ll have a place to find it.”

Danny shook his head, his expression patient and affectionate. “There’s a reason Rachel divorced me.”

“You said it was because she didn’t really understand what it meant to be married to a policeman. I know all about that. Even though you aren’t one any longer.”

“What if I were to move in and we start hating each other? What then?” Danny asked.

“Why would that happen? Yes, I’m a stubborn clean-freak. I cop to that. But all you have to do is stay out of my way,” Steve said with a silly grin.

He was rewarded when Danny laughed. “I’m not a clean-freak. It would drive you out of your mind inside a week.”

“Nope,” Steve said. “Give me that much more to clean.”

“I’m not moving into your house,” Danny said.

“You still haven’t given me a good reason,” Steve pointed out.

“I’ve given you plenty of them. You refuse to listen as is so often the case.”
“What? What’s that you said?”

“My point exactly,” Danny said, using his fork to emphasize what he was saying.

“Oh, okay,” Steve said. “Here’s what’s going to happen. You are going to end your lease next week. I happen to know it comes up for renewal at the end of the month. You are going to move in with me,” he held up one hand as Danny attempted to interrupt. “On a trial basis. For…let’s say six weeks. At the end of that time, if you don’t think it’s working, we’ll find you a cute little bungalow to buy. Under no circumstances are you renewing your lease in this hellhole.”

“See,” Danny said, drinking from Steve’s beer. His was empty and he was too involved in trying to talk Steve into seeing reason to get himself another one. “This. This is why I couldn’t live with you. You already try to run rough-shod over my entire life.”

“I am looking out for what’s best for you. Living here isn’t it. You’re going to get shot or robbed or go crazy because you can’t sleep. Besides which, you can easily afford a much better place.”

“Why do I have the feeling you snooped into my bank account?” Danny asked. He tried to sound put-out by the idea but he knew he didn’t succeed. Frankly he would welcome Steve into every nook and cranny of his life without hesitation. He just didn’t need Steve to know that.

“Don’t leave your browser open after you check your balance,” Steve recommended.

“That doesn’t give you permission to be all up into my business.”

Steve shrugged, looking innocent and above reproach. “Tell me you didn’t check my balance the last time I was on-line.”

“I have checked many parts of you. Your bank balance is not one of them,” Danny claimed.

“That doesn’t matter,” Steve said. “I’ll give you my passwords if you want them. Especially once you’re living with me.”

“See, that right there is why it’s a bad idea. If you said ‘once we’re living together’ I might be more inclined to agree. But it’s your house, babe. I’ll be poaching your territory.”

“We aren’t wolves,” Steve said. “And it’s semantics. I know you love words but seriously? Once we’re living together, you are welcome to check all of my balances.”

“No,” Danny said.

“Are you planning to pee on my trees?” Steve asked, persistent as always. “Because I never have. So you don’t need to worry about covering my scent.”

“Shut up,” Danny finally said. “And tell me what Sam said.”

“How can I do both? They are diametrical opposed,” Steve said with far too much satisfaction.

“You are one sentence away from being thrown out on your very fine ass,” Danny warned, taking Steve’s empty plate. “Before I get rid of you, do you need more spaghetti?”

“No thank you. It was quite delicious,” Steve said, plastering himself to Danny’s back. “You’d never
throw me back. You’re glad you caught me.”

“Hmm…” Danny said, shaking his head as well as he could while Steve was nibbling on his neck.
“What did Sam say?”

“He’s going to talk to Chin tomorrow or Friday. He isn’t pleased that Tua and Noshimuri may be teaming up.”

“What about Wo Fat?” Danny asked, washing the dishes while Steve dried.

“He’s concerned. Another reason he wants to talk to Chin. Sam said he could have Kaleo fired without much trouble if that’s what we want.”

Danny shrugged at that. “That would give Kaleo way too much free time.”

“That’s pretty much what I told Sam. He said he and Chin would deal with it. He also said he didn’t plan to tell the Governor. Does that strike you as odd?”

“A little, yeah. But maybe they have a clear division of labor,” Danny suggested.

“I guess,” Steve said. “Are we going to start packing your stuff on Friday?”

“I’m not answering that,” Danny said, grabbing the towel from Steve’s shoulder and swatting him with it. “Finish the dishes.”

“What are you going to do?” Steve asked, plunging his hands in the hot, soapy water as ordered.

“Put together the strawberry shortcake,” Danny said, pulling the ingredients from the refrigerator.

“Yum,” Steve said, watching with great interest. “Did Sahara like the strawberries?”

“Loved them. I nearly made her cry,” Danny said.

“That’s always a good sign,” Steve said. “She thinks we should live together.”

“Stop being stupid,” Danny requested. “She never said any such thing.”

“Maybe not. But if we asked her, she’d agree,” Steve said.

“What did I just say about not being stupid?” Danny said, putting whipped cream on the strawberries. They had been ladled over the pound cake, making a beautiful stack on the plates.

“If I thought I was being stupid, I’d be glad to stop,” Steve claimed, accepting one of the plates. “Mmm…delicious.”

“Don’t talk with your mouth full,” Danny scolded with a laugh he could do nothing to stop.

“This is why I need you around full time,” Steve claimed. “To remind me.”

“You most certainly don’t.”

“Did you factor into your refusal the fact that I have the major league package? And I get all the
NFL games,” Steve said.

“You’re going to be relentless, aren’t you?” Danny said with a sigh.

“Only way to complete the mission. Remain focused,” Steve told him.

“Now I’m a mission. Earlier I was a wolf.”

“You’re the one who said you’d be poaching. That wasn’t me because I don’t feel that way,”

Danny sighed again, staring down at his half eaten shortcake. “I can keep saying no and you’ll keep ignoring me, won’t you?”

“Yep,” Steve agreed far too happily.

“I can’t live with you. I hate you,” Danny lied.

“They aren’t mutually exclusive,” Steve informed him with a sloppy kiss. “You want to pack up your apartment yourself or hire it done?”

“Don’t you get to decide that too?” Danny asked, looking up at him with an endearing mix of exasperation and affection.

Steve shrugged, finishing his shortcake and stealing part of Danny’s. Danny didn’t bother to put up a token protest. Steve would have what Steve wanted. In truth, if Danny weren’t willing to cede significant parts of his life to Steve, he would stop him. But the idea of living with Steve filled him with a sense of security, of permanence that he hadn’t had in a long time. He refused to consider precisely how long it had been since those had been ripped out of his life.

He knew equally well that Steve had opened up parts of himself to Danny that had been walled up for so long Steve had almost forgotten they existed. Danny had helped Steve find himself again and if that didn’t equate to trust and security, Danny would have a hard time defining those terms.

“You’ll be begging me to leave in six weeks,” Danny predicted, feeding Steve the rest of his cake.

“Not going to happen,” Steve assured him. “Chin has cousins who own a moving company. I’ll call them in the morning for an appointment on Friday. They can pack up this place in twenty minutes. Then they’ll deliver it to our house and we can get you all settled in.”

Danny shook his head again but didn’t bother to argue. He only hoped Steve’s optimism wasn’t misplaced and that they’d make it to the six-week mark without killing each other.

“How’s your very fine ass?” Steve asked, rubbing over it gently.

“Better,” Danny assured him. “Sahara was outraged. She wanted to know who did it so she could have him fired. I told her I couldn’t tell her that.”

“I can understand her feelings,” Steve said. “What’d your cop friend say?”

“He knew who had done it. The broken nose was his first clue. Plus the one who did it took personal leave. My friend said they won’t be surprised if he never comes back.”
“He that far gone?” Steve asked. Even though the man had injured Danny, it was apparent there were things going on over which he had little or no control. Danny was collateral damage to the implosion of the man’s life.

“I think so,” Danny said sadly. “His wife filed for divorce a couple of months ago. Thankfully I’m not one of the reasons why. His kids won’t have anything to do with him. He’s had four partners in three months. He’s a good cop if he can get his head out of his ass.”

“That’s too bad,” Steve said.

“Yeah,” Danny said, washing their dessert plates. “You ready for bed?”

“Yes I am,” Steve agreed, following Danny into his bedroom. After they’d stripped naked and brushed their teeth, they lay curled up on Danny’s comfortable but too small bed. “I really do want you to move in.”

“I got that,” Danny said, rocking back against Steve’s front. He’d put up a token protest about being the little spoon but he fit so well to Steve’s big spoon, there wasn’t any way he could refuse.

“We’re going to be great together. We already are,” Steve said with a kiss before slipping off to sleep. Danny followed right after him, content in his decision to let Steve make tonight’s decisions.
Danny settles in. It’s a good fit, living with Steve.

*Every hooker I ever speak to tells me that it beats the hell out of waitressing.* ~Woody Allen

Danny moved in and it felt like he’d always lived there. His new life had emerged seamlessly from his old. Steve made every effort possible to make it their house, telling Danny to make any changes he wanted. That included curtains, rugs, the arrangement of the kitchen cabinets.

Danny was a little surprised that no part of the house, or by extension Steve’s life, was off limits. Any documents that Danny would not be allowed to access because of their confidential nature were locked away in a safe deposit box at the Navy Federal Credit Union, Steve McGarrett’s official bank.

As promised, Steve cleared out the two other bedrooms, turning one into a photographer’s studio. The second he left empty for Danny to fill as he desired. That was entirely up to Danny’s discretion. Steve didn’t care if he left it empty. It was Danny’s space and Danny’s to do with as he pleased.

Steve was in the sunroom, looking through a beat up tool chest when Danny got home from an appointment. It had taken half the time he’d expected but he got paid the full amount for it.

“You’re home early,” Steve said with a smile, leaning back to accept Danny’s kiss.

“She cried the entire time,” Danny said with a sigh. “I wish there was something I could do.”

“Her problems aren’t yours to solve,” Steve remained him. “Phyllis is a smart and resourceful woman. She’ll be okay.”

“I know,” Danny said, leaning up against the warmth of Steve. “What’s this you’re doing?”

“Remember how I told you Dad called me ‘champ’ right before he was killed?”

“Yeah,” Danny said.

“Well, I’m pretty sure he was referring to this toolbox. He wanted me to go through it. I’ve looked at the stuff inside a hundred times and it still seems like a collection of junk.”

“Huh,” Danny said, peering into the box. “What are these pictures?”

“From the crime scene when Mom was killed,” Steve said, pulling them out and untying the weathered string keeping them in a stack. “The bomb was meant for Dad. She took his car that day because hers wouldn’t start.”
“Wow. They wanted to make sure it took him out,” Danny said looking at the charred remains of what had been a car.

“And then there are these postcards. From Japan of all places,” Steve said, showing them to Danny. “Dad never went to Japan. I don’t recognize this handwriting.”

“Can you read what they say?”

“This one says the usual – ‘weather’s beautiful. Having a wonderful time.’ This one says they saw the cherry blossoms. It was like watching pink snow with all the petals in the air.”

“Who is they?” Danny asked, squinting down at the signature.

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “It doesn’t make any sense.”

“Is this a picture of Governor Jameson?” Danny asked, studying the faint photo.

“Yeah,” Steve said. “That’s Sam behind her. Dad’s right there. I don’t know who that man is.”

“He was the former police chief. He was fired under very mysterious circumstances. Your father never mentioned it?”

“We didn’t have a lot of time for small talk,” Steve admitted. “That was mainly my fault. I didn’t come home on leave.”

“Ever?” Danny asked sadly.

“There never seemed to be enough time. And I promised myself I’d get home the next Christmas. Or the next birthday,” Steve said. The regret weighed down his words, making them fall heavily between them.

“Babe, don’t beat yourself up. Being a SEAL didn’t give you a lot of time for a personal life. That’s the nature of the job.”

“I guess,” Steve said.

“Why did Hesse kill your dad?” Danny asked.

“At the time, it was because I had captured Victor’s brother Anton. Afterwards I heard that Victor was after something he thought my father had. Capturing Anton gave him an excuse to kill Dad. I still don’t know what Hesse wanted.”

“You didn’t find anything suspicious in the house?”

“No,” Steve said. “But it was a crime scene. It wasn’t secured 24/7. Hesse could have come back and found what he wanted. He ransacked the house before he pulled the trigger. His return could have gone unnoticed.”

“What could your father have been investigating that would lead to his murder by an international criminal?” Danny said, the magnitude of the crime increasing the more he learned.

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “That’s why I’m going back through the box. I have got to be missing
“Well, the box will still be here after we have lunch. What do you want?”

“I made shish kabobs while you were out,” Steve said, delighted with Danny’s surprise. “I’ll fire up the grill and they’ll be ready in no time.”

“Fabulous,” Danny agreed, reaching up for a kiss. “Once we’ve eaten, I’d like to take some pictures of my boyfriend in my new studio.”

“Huh,” Steve said, going out back with him to light the grill. “He’s coming over, is he?”

“Keep up the smart-ass talk and I’ll get myself a new one,” Danny warned.

Steve laughed at that, leaning down to kiss him in reminder of why he wasn’t interested in finding another boyfriend. “Noted.”

“Good. You don’t have any appointments tonight, right?”

“I did. She cancelled while you were out. I think she thinks her husband knows,” Steve said.

“Who’s that? Felicia?”

“Yeah. I may not see her again,” Steve said.

“That’s too bad. I know you enjoyed being….” Danny stopped, distracted by the fire Steve had lit. He was debating about the merits of getting the garden hose to have it close at hand. The flames were shooting up higher than Steve was tall. “We’re having shish kabobs, babe. Not grilling an elephant.”

“Elephant is pretty tasty,” Steve said, admiring his bonfire.

“You have not eaten elephant,” Danny said, taking a step back when Steve reached for the lighter fluid.

“Maybe I have,” Steve said. He turned to talk to Danny, looking over his shoulder in surprise that Danny had backed away. “I’m going to put it away, not add more to the fire.”

“I can never be sure with you. You are a pyromaniac.”

Steve shrugged innocently at that. “There are worse things I could be.”

“Like a prostitute?” Danny asked, laughing.

“Nude model,” Steve suggested.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Danny said, reaching over for the can. “Give me that. I’ll put it away.”

“Fine,” Steve said, surrendering it to him. “Bring out the kabobs.”

“We can’t cook them yet. They’d be torched to ash.”
“The fire will burn down soon. And bring me a beer.”

“When did I become your man-servant?” Danny asked, shaking his head in dismay.

“How long have we been dating?” Steve asked in return.

“Why would I date you? You are a maniac.”

“Have I ever denied it?” Steve said, pointing out what he thought was obvious.

“I knew you were trouble the minute I opened the door to room 445. I should have slammed it closed and run for the hills.”

“You’d never run for the hills. You’d have to go through the rain forest. It’d mess up your ‘do,” Steve said, reaching out to ruffle Danny’s hair.

“No touching the hair,” Danny said, backing away. He turned to sprint toward the house when Steve tried to capture him. He could hear Steve’s laughter as he entered through the backdoor.

Danny could only smile to himself. The Steve he’d left on the beach was not the same one he’d met at the King’s Inn. This Steve smiled and laughed and didn’t have a dark cloud over his head. It lightened Danny’s heart that Steve had begun to heal, and was helping Danny heal at the same time.

“What are you smiling about?” Steve asked when Danny returned with the shish kabobs and two cold beers.

“Nothing special,” Danny said, reaching up to kiss Steve. “Loving life.”

“That’s new for you,” Steve teased, shoving his hands in the back pockets of Danny’s jeans. He liked having his hands full of the luscious ass.

“It started changing in room 445,” Danny confirmed.

“Me too,” Steve agreed, kissing him in proof.

“I see you managed not to burn down the neighborhood even though I left you alone for 10 minutes,” Danny said, looking up at Steve slightly dazed. Steve’s kisses often had that effect on him.

“Neighborhood’s just fine.”

Steve managed to cook the kabobs without incidence, Danny supervising. By supervising, he mainly meant he sat in one of the beach chairs and drank his beer. He kept up a running commentary, telling Steve about Phyllis and that when she finally stopped crying, she said she was going to refer a couple of her friends to Danny.

“Male or female?” Steve asked, not that it mattered.

Danny shrugged. “I didn’t ask. If they have the money, what do I care?”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed. “You want to eat inside or out here?”

“Let’s go in. I’m hot.”
“Yes you are,” Steve said with a wink as he took the kabobs off the grill.

“Not as hot as you,” Danny said, smacking Steve’s ass. “Such a nice ass.”

“Thank you. By the way, Chin told me who beat you.”

“What? Why? He said he’d keep it to himself.”

Steve shrugged as they sat down to eat. “I’m not planning to do anything about it.”

“I should hope not. We’ve had this discussion. I neither need nor want you to rescue me.”

“I have no plans to,” Steve promised. “Chin wanted me to know in case the cop called me.”

“Because you don’t tell me the name of everyone you contacts you,” Danny said with a frown.

“You tell me,” Steve pointed out. “Makes sense for security reasons.”

“Security reasons. You want to know because you are nosy.”

“Maybe,” Steve said. “Security. Nosy. They are very similar.”

“No they are not,” Danny said.

“Okay,” Steve laughed.
When they finished eating and had cleaned up, they went up to the newly installed studio. Danny turned on a few of the ambient lights, pulling a plush armchair in front of the green screen. He liked using an essentially blank canvas so he could put in whatever background he wanted, including none at all.

“You did an excellent job in here,” Danny said, once again admiring the set-up. The room wasn’t huge but it was big enough for him to take evocative and seductive photos.

“Painting the walls and ceiling black was a real chore,” Steve said, watching him set things up. “You want me naked?”

“In a minute,” Danny said, eyeing Steve up and down like a specimen. “You still have that one-size-too-small tee shirt?”

“The white one?” Steve asked.

“Yeah, that one. And the jeans with the holes in them,” Danny requested. “Bring your combat boots.”

“ Anything else?” Steve asked patiently.

“I think that’s it for now. No briefs under the jeans.”

“When I have ever worn briefs?” Steve asked with a laugh.

“I’m hoping to eventually civilize you.”

Steve was still laughing as he went to their bedroom to get the clothes Danny had requested. Once he’d collected them, he took them into the studio, not wanting to deprive Danny of one of his favorite hobbies – Steve-watching.

“Stand under the light while you change,” Danny requested, looking at him through the viewfinder.

“Here?” Steve asked, the light cascading softly on his hard muscles and dark, rich tattoos. Danny turned down one of the spotlights, making Steve’s angles stand out even more.

“Right there,” Danny agreed.
“Let me know when you’re ready,” Steve said patiently. Danny was back behind his camera, adjusting this or that. Steve wasn’t sure exactly what he was doing but it made no difference to him. He had nothing else to do and if taking pictures of him made Danny happy, that made Steve happy.

“Okay, SEAL boy. Change like you normally would. Don’t pose.”

“Copy that,” Steve said, pulling his grey tee shirt up over his head. He could hear the shutter of the camera but it hardly registered. Once he had the shirt folded and set aside, he stepped out of his slippahs. As he reached for his belt, the shutter went off a little faster. How would Danny possibly sort through all of those pictures? Steve considered that question as he lowered his jeans, stepping out of them. He folded those as well, looking directly at Danny. “You want me to redress?” Steve waited but got no answer. “Danny?”

“Huh?” Danny said, sounding distracted. He was still watching Steve through the viewfinder, the shutter clicking.

“You want me to redress?” Steve asked, hands on his hips as he laughed at Danny.


“Like this?” Steve said, reaching for his cock that was beginning to take an interest. It wasn’t hard but it was about to be. Steve stroked himself, licking his lips as he looked down at himself.

“You want some lube?” Danny asked breathlessly.

“Do you want me to come?” Steve asked, his voice slightly strained from the encroaching arousal.

“No, no. I’ll take care of you,” Danny promised.

“No lube will make it last longer,” Steve said, spreading his legs apart. He reached for his testicles, rolling them with the fingers of his left hand. “Uhn…”


“You’re going to need to get naked,” Steve said, staring wide-eyed at Danny.

“You’re close, huh?” Danny said, straightening from behind the tripod to stare hungrily at Steve.

“Get naked,” Steve breathed. He was panting, his hand still around his hard cock.

Danny laughed, coming around the camera toward him. “I’m right here.”

“Thank God,” Steve said, pulling on Danny’s tee shirt. He nearly ripped it, he was in such a hurry to get it off. “Your pants. Off, off, off.”

“All right,” Danny laughed, unzipping and kicking off his jeans. “Sit, sit. You’re going to fall over.” He guided Steve to the plush chair, taking the towel from the back and putting it on the seat. “Now.”

Steve sat slumped, pulling Danny into his lap. “Oh hell. Lube. Condom.”
Danny plunged his hand between the cushion and the plump arm bringing out both. He wasted no
time getting the condom on Steve before giving him the lube. “Always be prepared.”

“You were never a Boy Scout,” Steve panted as Danny coated him.

“Still a good motto for hookers,” Danny said, kissing any protests out of Steve’s mouth. Danny
raised up over Steve, awkwardly shifting forward.

“Let me in,” Steve pleaded, leaning forward enough to bite Danny’s collarbone. “Let me in.”

“Okay, okay. Have a little patience.”

“Never my strong suit,” Steve admitted, guiding his cock into Danny’s welcoming body. “Finally.”

Danny captured Steve’s mouth again, their tongues doing the dance that matched their bodies. “We
need to do this more often,” Danny whispered when he could talk.

“Uhn?” Steve grunted.

“Sitting in a chair,” Danny clarified.

“Mmm…” Steve agreed.

Danny kissed him again instead of laughing at his inability to say anything coherent.

As much as they both wanted it to last, they came quickly and completely, shaking in the aftermath.

Danny was slumped over Steve, enjoying his hard, muscular pillow. Steve was holding tight to
Danny, absorbing his warmth and the satisfaction flowing freely between them.

“I need t’move or ’m goin’ to hurt you,” Danny said, some of his words slurred.

“Yeah,” Steve said, not concerned. “You get some good shots?”

“Think so,” Danny said, carefully easing up and off Steve. He collapsed onto Steve’s thighs, leaning
back into him.

“Guess the others’ll have to wait,” Steve said, his eyes drifting down. He didn’t always feel the
overwhelming need to sleep after coming but when he was with Danny, he could barely keep his
eyes open afterwards.

“Yeah,” Danny said, leaving Steve’s lap and holding out a hand. “Com’ on.”

“Uhn.” Steve took Danny’s hand and let himself be led into their bedroom. Steve fell face first into
the bed, Danny wrapping himself in Steve’s warmth.

“Go to sleep, SEAL boy. I’ll be right here when you wake up,” Danny said, kissing Steve before
closing his eyes to nap with his…love….oh. Danny’s eyes popped open at that thought. Love. They
had never discussed it, never gotten close. But wasn’t that what they shared, really? What they felt
could only be soul deep, indisputable love, right? Danny tried comparing what he felt for Steve with
what he’d felt for Rachel. There were similarities but in some ways the experiences were polar
opposites. The grief he felt first from the divorce and then from losing Rachel and Grace made remembering the good times, the love they had shared almost impossible. But now he had fallen in love with Steve - maybe, possibly. Yeah. He was pretty sure it was true.

“You are thinking so loud I can’t sleep,” Steve protested, pulling him closer and wrapping his body around Danny.

“Do you know what I’m thinking?”

“No. Not groceries,” Steve said with a sleepy smile. “You wanna tell me?”

“Maybe. When you wake up,” Danny said, kissing his smiling lips. “Go to sleep. I’ll count sheep.”


“Whatever you say,” Danny agreed, kissing him again and relaxing into his embrace.
Chapter Summary

Steve makes a decision about the future of their professional lives. Danny agrees, because what choice does he realistically have?

_Prostitution is criminal, and bad things happen because it's run illegally by dirt-bags who are criminals. If it's legal, then the girls could have health checks, unions, benefits, anything any other worker gets, and it would be far better._ ~Jesse Ventura

They slept peacefully for about an hour, waking leisurely and easily. They took a shower before throwing on jeans and tee shirts to go downstairs. Steve said he felt the need to clean something. Danny decided he’d look through the pictures he’d taken. Then he’d make some dinner.

The afternoon and evening passed very pleasantly and domestically. Danny’s revelation was buzzing in the back of his head but he didn’t know whether to tell Steve or not. He wasn’t afraid of being rejected – not exactly. He thought perhaps he was worried about scaring off Steve. He was still relatively new to this whole relationship thing and Danny sure didn’t want to rush him into places he wasn’t ready to go.

“You need to tell me,” Steve said when they were in bed together. They were both looking at their laptops, until right then enjoying their silent companionship.

“Tell you what?” Danny asked as though he didn’t know.

“You accuse me of having _Contemplation Face_. You’ve had one all afternoon. What’s going on in there?” Steve asked, watching Danny.

Danny thought Steve looked…not nervous exactly. A little anxious, perhaps. As though he was expecting bad news. That wasn’t fair to Steve. But was it fair to tell him the truth if Steve wasn’t ready for those words?

“Stop thinking and tell me,” Steve requested. “Whatever it is, we’ll deal with it.”

“Deal with it?” Danny repeated.

“Have I done something to upset you?” Steve asked. He couldn’t think of any way he’d made Danny angry. And Danny hardly held back when he had anything to say.

“No, babe,” Danny said, leaning closer. “This afternoon, when we were taking a nap, it occurred to me that…well, for ill or for good, I’ve fallen in love with you.”

Steve smiled at that, a wide, unrestrained smile of pure happiness. “Oh yeah?”
“Pretty much, yeah,” Danny confirmed.

“And that’s what’s given you upset face all afternoon?”

“I don’t have upset face,” Danny said firmly.

“You most certainly do. Would you prefer that you didn’t…you know…feel the way you feel?”

“Of course not,” Danny said, “But you can’t even say the word. I’m scared of scaring you off.”

“I don’t scare so easy, babe. I’m a SEAL,” Steve reminded him, puffing up at the words.

“If I were a grenade, you’d have no trouble at all. But declarations of affection you’re not necessarily so good with,” Danny said warily.

“There haven’t been a lot of them in my life,” Steve agreed. “Doesn’t mean I don’t want this one.”

“All right,” Danny said with a warm smile. “As long as you don’t object to me feeling this way.”

“Just the opposite,” Steve assured him, leaning closer to plant a sloppy kiss on his cheek. “Thank you.”

Danny laughed at him, kissing him properly. “You are such a goof.”

Steve shrugged, looking at Danny with his big, bruised heart in his eyes. How did Danny get so lucky? That’s what he couldn’t figure out.

“How much money do you have?” Steve asked, returning to study his computer.

“Why? You planning to buy something expensive you can’t afford?”

“Maybe,” Steve hedged.

“What?” Danny asked, leaning closer to him.

“This estate,” Steve said, showing him the picture on his laptop.

“Why would you want an estate with…three guest houses and a helicopter landing pad?”

“So we can turn it into a brothel,” Steve said as though it was a foregone conclusion.

“A what?” Danny said, certain he’d heard incorrectly.

“A whorehouse. A house of ill-repute.”

“You want to buy an estate for …$1.25 million and turn it into a brothel,” Danny said. Maybe if he said it, he could understand. Because hearing those words in Steve’s voice made no sense.

“I want us to buy this estate and turn it into a private club. That’s what we’ll call it at any rate. Because we can’t call it a brothel.”
“We don’t have one and quarter million dollars,” Danny pointed out.

“No but the sellers will probably take a million. It’s been on the market for two years. According to the register of deeds’ website, they paid just under 750K for it four years ago. If we offer a million, they’re going to take it,” Steve said.

“Hold on, babe. I need to catch up. You want to sink all of the money that we both have, which by the way isn’t enough, into an estate and make it a whorehouse?”

“We don’t have to use our money to buy it,” Steve said.

“No bank is going to give us a mortgage. We have no visible source of income.”

“We don’t need a bank. We only need Stan. He can provide the financing for the bulk of the price.”

“Wait,” Danny said, holding up one hand. “Have you talked to Stan about this?”

“Not yet. But he’ll do it.”

Danny shook his head, trying hard to catch up. “How long have you been thinking about this?”

“Since shortly after we met,” Steve said casually. “Once we open the private club, we won’t need our own clients any longer. The only people we’ll have sex with is each other. We can have all the tests and dispense with condoms.”

“Dispense with condoms,” Danny repeated with some hand waving. “Is that all this is about? You want to spend a million dollars so you don’t have to use condoms?”

“Of course not,” Steve said far too calmly. “That’s just a side benefit. We can’t be hookers forever. We don’t want to at any rate. I want you all to myself. Opening a private club will give us an income and keep us out of anyone else’s bed.”

“What do we know about running a brothel?” Danny asked.

“A private club,” Steve corrected. “You’re good with numbers. I’m good at organizing. Chin has cousins who can provide almost all the services we need – food, security, housekeepers, groundskeepers.”

“You discussed this with Chin before talking to me?” Danny asked sharply.

“I needed to have most of the plans made so when you objected I could assure you it was taken care of. I only mentioned the idea to Chin once. He thought it was an excellent plan.”

“You are making my head spin,” Danny protested.

“I know,” Steve said. “You have to admit it makes sense. This estate has enough land around it that there will be no nosy neighbors. We install a gate at the end of the drive and issue card keys to the members.”

“Members,” Danny said, trying it out. “How much will these theoretical members of this theoretical brothel pay?”
“I called around and did some research online,” Steve said, pulling up a spreadsheet. “I figured that we would charge a one-time initiation fee of $150,000 and a monthly fee of $10,000.”

“That seems steep,” Danny said, looking at the columns of figures.

“We have to make sure we attract only the right sort of people. By that I mean charging $150k keeps out the police, no offense.”

“None taken,” Danny said. “And the $10k monthly fee is for… perks?”

“Exactly. We recruit women and men to service the clients. I know a handful of hookers who would be perfect for this, not including you and me. We take care of all the arrangements, we hire housekeepers to keep things immaculate, pool-boys, bartenders. The house already has a kitchen that is nearly commercial grade. It wouldn’t be hard to make it ready to feed 50 to 75 people at a time.”

“We’d need a liquor license.”

“Sam will make sure it goes through without any trouble. Neither of us has a criminal record. My DUIs won’t count. And since I’m a veteran, they would have a hard time telling us no even without Sam’s help.”

“Okay,” Danny said, taking a deep breath. “We won’t have a golf course. So if I were to become a member, could I come and have sex with as many employees as I wanted? Could I eat as much as I wanted for free?”

“I anticipated these questions,” Steve said, far too smugly. “For the monthly fee of $10,000, Mr. Williams, you are allocated five visits with our specialty staff. These specialty visits can be copulatory…”

“Copulatory,” Danny repeated.

“Shall I continue, Mr. McGarrett? I didn’t intend to interrupt.”

“Thank you. Your five visits may be copulatory - or sexual - in nature, may be to our fully equipped spa, or two of the visits may be combined for our special 48 hour detox therapy. Should you desire additional visits in any calendar month, they may be purchased at the rate of $2500.”

“My five visits are only $2000 each. Why am I being charged more for an additional visit?”

“Because you may be taking the place of another one of our members. As you can see, we have limited space. We can service up to 45 guests in one day. This does not include, of course, the casino or visiting our restaurant.”

“A casino? I was not aware your club included a casino.”

“Indeed, Mr. Williams. We have professional dealers, a Vegas authorized roulette wheel, as well as a state-of-the-art craps table.”

“How much is admission to the casino?”
“There is no additional charge to enter. You will need to purchase your chips just as you would at any such establishment,” Steve informed him.

“Food and drink? Are they included in my $10,000 per month?”

“You are vouchered four meals. All liquor must be purchased. That’s a law we are unable to circumvent.”

“Once I’ve consumed my four meals, what are the rates?”

“There is a menu. It will change frequently as our chef prepares the food in accordance to what he admires at the market. The prices are printed plainly on the menu.”

“No breakfast then.”

“Lunch and dinner,” Steve confirmed. “We are open 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. seven days a week. We are, however, closed on most major holidays.”

“I see,” Danny said, considering it. “What if my…significant other throws me out? Can I stay here for a little while?”

“We have three guest cottages. You can rent one exclusively for $400 per night.”

“What does that include?”

“A place to sleep,” Steve said. “And access to our infinity edge swimming pool, which you can see pictured right here.”

“My brother-in-law is in town for work. May he take advantage of your lovely facilities and all its amenities?”

“Members may refer visitors,” Steve said. “Visitors will be charged $3,000 for one week. That includes two visits and three meals.”

“He’ll only be here a few days,” Danny said.

“It is $3,000 for visitors, Mr. Williams. We do not pro-rate it.”

“Huh,” Danny said, considering all that Steve had said. “How long have you been planning this?”

“I told you. Since we met. We’ll make plenty of money and can hang up our, what, boxers?”

“Like you ever wear boxers,” Danny laughed, shaking his head. “You are something special.”

“Is that a yes?” Steve asked with a smile.

“Maybe. It’s a definite maybe. We aren’t selling this house, are we?”

“Absolutely not. We’re going to hire someone to manage the club so we don’t have to be there around the clock.”

“You’ll go crazy if you don’t have something to do,” Danny warned.
“The club will give both of us plenty to do,” Steve assured him.

“Okay, okay,” Danny said, trying to catch up. “Can we make an appointment to see this estate? Or have you already done that?”

“I haven’t made an appointment. But the agent is available Friday,” Steve said. “I did check.”

“All right. Make an appointment. We’ll look at it. But that’s all. Just look. I’m not making any promises.”

“Understood,” Steve assured him.

“What happens when law enforcement finds out? It’s a small island you know.”

Steve waved it away. “Why would they bother us? We won’t be selling drugs. We’ll have a license to be a massage parlor. They’d have to prove we were providing sex for money. They could only do that by joining.”

“Yeah,” Danny agreed.

“We may have to worry about the underworld objecting to our enterprise,” Steve said. “But I figure we can buy protection from Tua if comes to it. I’d rather not but I also don’t want to be in their crosshairs.”

“If we have to buy protection, we’ll need to up our fees,” Danny suggested before he realized what he’d said. He had as much as agreed with Steve’s plans. God he was in so much trouble.

“I knew you’d think it was a good idea,” Steve said far too smugly.

“You’ve watched *Casablanca* one too many times. That’s why you want to open a private club.”

“Maybe. I’ve been told I look *fine* in a tuxedo.”


“It’d only reach my hips,” Steve laughed.

“Even better. Do you already have a name picked out for this private club of yours?”

“A name?” Steve repeated, blinking in surprise.

“Yes, babe. It’d need a name. You know – like Rick’s Café American.”

“Oh. I hadn’t thought about a name.”

“That seems a pretty big detail to neglect,” Danny said laughing at him.

“Shut up,” Steve countered. “What should we call it?”

“I have no idea. Is there a word in Hawaiian for whorehouse?”
“Most places I’ve been, it’s called a brothel or a bordello. I don’t think Hawaii has a specific word for it.”

“Hmmm… well. Since it’s going to be a private club, calling it a brothel would be counterproductive,” Danny decided.

“True.”

“All right. We’ll go Friday and look. Just look,” Danny emphasized. But Steve knew Danny would say yes. It was inevitable but Steve would not gloat. He wouldn’t. “I’m going to sleep. I have to get up early in the morning.” Danny leaned over the side of the bed to place his laptop on the floor. When he straightened back up, Steve was smiling at him, his head nestled in his pillow. “You going to sleep now?”

“Yep,” Steve confirmed, reaching out of Danny. “‘Night, babe.”

“Goodnight you goof.”
Chapter Summary

Steve meets with a client who thinks the club is an excellent idea. It turns out that the client is better connected than Steve thought.

... tobacco kills 52,000 people a year from lung cancer, and there's no telling how many lives have been ruined through drinking. But to my knowledge, no one has ever died of a blow job. ~Florynce R. Kennedy

“Hey,” Danny said the next morning as he reentered their bedroom, toweling dry his hair. “Are you still asleep?”

“I would be,” Steve grumped, burying his face deeper into the pillow. “If it weren’t for a loud, blond haole that’s wandered into the house.”

“Oh right. Like you weren’t planning to get up in the next ten minutes for your marathon swim,” Danny said, sitting on the edge of Steve’s side of the bed. “Club Four-Four-Five.”

“Huh?” Steve looked confused and sleepy and altogether too delicious.

“If we open the club, we should call it Club Four-Four-Five. You, me, and Sam will be the only ones who know why.”

“Yeah,” Steve said with a broad smile. “That’s perfect. We can limit the total number of members to 445. We may never get that many but it we do, we’ll cut it off there.”

“Exactly. We’ll need to incorporate and get all the licenses.”

“I thought we were only looking at the estate on Friday,” Steve said, his smile crinkling his eyes.

“We are only looking. We don’t necessarily want to buy the first one we find,” Danny pointed out. Steve laughed at him, sitting up enough to kiss him. “I knew you’d see it my way.”

“Smug is not a good look for you, babe,” Danny said.

“Yeah it is,” Steve said.

“When are your appointments today?” Danny asked after he reluctantly left Steve’s warmth to dress.

“I’m meeting Jonathan at 2:00. Then I’m having dinner with George.”

“George?” Danny said. He didn’t know of anyone named George and wasn’t aware that Steve did either.
“I’ve told you about him. He likes to have dinner in public with me. He’s single and says he gets to take the ones I don’t want. Which, as you know, are all of them. If he doesn’t pick up someone in the restaurant he blows me and that’s it.”

“Oh right. I didn’t know that was his name,” Danny said. “Where are you going to eat?”

“I have no idea. He decides. He’ll text me this afternoon. I wish he weren’t so God-awful boring.”

“They are the worse,” Danny agreed. “Having to pretend they are witty and clever. Can’t they tell our laughter is fake?”

“George doesn’t care. I listen. He’s happy. And he installs kitchens in restaurants. He’ll upgrade the kitchen of the club for us.”

“At a discount,” Danny said.

“Of course. I’m thinking that the first memberships will be offered to our current clients. Maybe even at a discount. Then all future members will be by personal referral only.”

“That makes sense,” Danny agreed. “If Sam wants to refer someone, will that count? I doubt he’ll be able to join.”

“We’d naturally accept his referral. We’d have to judge any other referrals on a case-by-case basis.”

“So Stan could refer members,” Danny said.

“Exactly,” Steve said, leaving the bed in order to make it with military precision. “You have time for a cup of coffee?”

“If you hurry,” Danny said. He was dressed and ready, the perfect amount of product in his hair to keep it in place, for at least the next hour.

They had their coffee, Danny leaving with a quick kiss. Steve researched private clubs, making a few phone calls after he’d been swimming. He found two other estates he thought might work, making appointments to see all three on Friday. If they made a decision on one, they could talk to Stan about financing.

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As he was returning from his appointment with Jonathan, George texted and said to meet him at Stanton Street. That meant Steve had to put on dressier clothes. There wasn’t much time for him to shower and change.

Jonathan had wanted him to stay the night, which he knew Steve never did. Jonathan had only recently left the Air Force, and much like Steve had, felt unteethered. Steve assured him it got better. Jonathan tried to believe him although he said he wouldn’t be following Steve into prostitution. Steve agreed that was for the best.

Steve buttoned up his crisp white shirt and tucked it into his black dress trousers. He didn’t mind dressing up but these clothes were significantly hotter than his usual attire. These made him feel like he was melting. But George paid him enough to make the inconvenience worthwhile. Plus George enjoyed good food so every meal with him was exceptional.
Where are you? Steve had expected Danny home before he arrived.

Appt ran L8. Am @ grocery store. Need anything?

Nope. I'm leaving now. Be home L8 Steve reminded him.

Right. I'm buying Phish Food. It's all MINE

Wtvr

:-)

Steve got to Stanton Street at 7:40. There had been an accident which caused a traffic jam and he’d
texted George to let him know he was caught in the middle of it. Once he’d turned his truck over to
the valets, he entered the dimly lit restaurant, smiling at the hostess.

“Hello,” she said with an appreciative sweep of her eyes.

“Good evening,” he returned, his smile reddening her cheeks even more. “I’m meeting George
Deering.”

“Certainly, sir. He’s right over here,” she said, her very high heels clicking on the wooden floor as
she showed him the table where George waited. “Enjoy your meal.”

“I will,” Steve agreed, sitting in the sculpted wooden chair across from George. “Sorry I’m late.”

“I was caught in the traffic too,” George said, waving it off. “I only got here right before you did.”

Steve nodded, accepting the heavy menu from the waiter. The waiter also handed one to George
without taking his eyes off of Steve.

George was not an unattractive man, a few inches shorter than Steve with a few more pounds. He
wasn’t all hard tan muscle like Steve, his hair longer, his eyes brown. He’d discovered quite by
accident that dining out with Steve was like chum to sharks. Steve didn’t want the warm bodies that
swarmed him and George’s money convinced them he’d do as runner-up.

“I’ll have a vodka martini,” Steve responded when the waiter asked if they wanted something to
drink.

“That sounds good,” George agreed, watching the waiter walk away with a familiar gleam in his
brown eyes.

“Have you had a good week?” Steve asked, sipping from the crystal goblet filled with water.

“I have,” George said, turning his focus fully on Steve. “We got three new contracts. They could
make our entire year.”

“That is excellent news,” Steve said. “New restaurants or renovations?”

“All new,” George said. “One right downtown. It’s going to be the talk of the island when it’s open.
The other two are smaller, although one is apparently going to be opulent to the point of gaudy. May
make a go. May not. The third will fail as soon as it opens its doors.”

“Why is that?” Steve asked. It was the expected question and he was genuinely interested for his own reasons.

“The guy opening it thinks he’s too clever to listen to advice from anybody who has actually run a successful restaurant. One of my guys told me he’s opening it because his wife is bored and it will give her something to do.”

“That is a terrible reason to open a restaurant,” Steve said to George’s nods.

“Right, right. I met with them yesterday and they argued the entire time. The entire time. She wanted stainless steel appliances. He wanted porcelain.”

Their conversation paused as the waiter returned with their drinks. He placed a cocktail napkin under each drink, inquiring if they were ready to order.

“We need a few more minutes,” George told him. The waiter nodded and reluctantly walked away. George reached over and lifted Steve’s glass, Steve watching in curiosity. Once his frosty glass was set aside, George picked up the cocktail napkin that had been under it. He turned it over to show Steve where the waiter had written his name and phone number.

“That’s subtle,” Steve laughed.

“Very,” George agreed, laughing. “You want it?”

“No,” Steve said. “Not my type.”

“I doubt he has your kind of money at any rate,” George agreed.

Steve shrugged at that. It wasn’t the first time George had reminded Steve he was a date-for-hire. Since it was true, Steve didn’t mind. Plus George wasn’t the most adept at conversation. He seemed to perpetually suffer foot-in-mouth disease.

“Isn’t porcelain mostly household appliances?” Steve asked, ready to change the subject before George managed to insult him even more, intentionally or unintentionally.

“Some restaurants have porcelain coated appliances. But she’s right. Stainless steel is more common for commercial restaurants.”

“Did they make a decision?” Steve asked as he studied the menu. Everything sounded so good, he was having a hard time making up his mind.

“Stainless steel. She said it’s her restaurant, she gets to decide,” George said.

“Makes sense,” Steve said.

“He said he was paying for it so all the decisions weren’t hers.”

“Yeah,” Steve said. “That doesn’t sound promising.”

“Not in the least,” George agreed. “Do you know what you’re having?”
“I guess one of everything is out of the question,” Steve laughed.

“I know what you mean,” George said. “I’m leaning toward the grilled mahi-mahi. Heard it’s some of the best.”

“Hmm…” Steve said. “Did he give us the specials?”

“No. He was too busy,” George said.

“Doesn’t matter,” Steve said. “I’m going to have…” He really wanted the crab legs but they were so messy to eat, he was a little surprised they’d added them to the menu. There was no way to eat them with any degree of elegance or with your dignity in tact. “…crab stuffed tilapia.”

“Thereis is excellent,” George agreed, sipping his drink. “Even though you normally refuse, I have to go to San Francisco for a conference.”

“You know I don’t leave Oahu,” Steve said firmly.

“Don’t you want to see other cities, Steve? Visit the mainland?”

“What do you suppose I did before I returned home to Hawaii?” Steve asked him, a topic they had never before discussed.

“I have considered that question,” George admitted. “I finally decided you were a mercenary. You have a guarded quality about you which speaks of violence you have seen and probably even perpetrated. You never talk about yourself, which I can understand. I’m pretty sure you speak a handful of languages besides English.” He stopped to look up at the waiter when he returned. “We’re ready now.”

The waiter nodded, taking down their requests and leaving them to their conversation.

Steve was surprised that George had been as observant as he had been. Steve had slotted him into the category of client who only cared about themselves. To those clients, Steve was a good time, one that lasted only as long as they cared for it to. He had no intention of confirming or denying most of what George had said.

“Am I close?” George asked, curious and strangely warm in his question.

“I do speak several languages,” Steve said.

“You’ve killed and seen others do it,” George said. “That can’t help but change a man.”

“Have you?” Steve asked in curiosity.

“No,” George said. “Do you have family?”

“I have a sister I haven’t seen in several years.”

“That your decision or hers?”

“Mutual,” Steve said. “How is it you know I speak other languages?”
“Several times when we’ve been out, there have been conversations in other languages at close-by tables. The expression on your face indicated you could understand what they were saying.”

“I’m that transparent?” Steve asked, sipping his martini.

“Not at all. You looked like someone who felt guilty for eavesdropping but couldn’t do anything about it.”

Steve laughed at his description. “When people think you don’t speak their language, they tend to be less guarded in what they say in public.”

“So you’ve learned some dark family secrets,” George said with a smile.

“Several,” Steve agreed.

“Have you been to San Francisco?”

“Yes,” Steve said, leaving it at that.

“And you won’t consider going with me? All expenses paid.”

“Thank you, no,” Steve said.

“May I ask you another question?” George said. “One you are free to refuse?”

“As long as I can refuse,” Steve agreed.

“You’re very attractive. You’re obviously intelligent and have training in…something. Why enter this profession?” George asked.

“When I got home, I was…adrift. I had no purpose, no direction. I started doing this by accident. I don’t regret it. I’ve met some really interesting people.”

“Made a lot of money,” George added with a smile.

Steve could only shrug. “It wasn’t anything I had ever considered doing. I am thinking about ‘retiring,’” Steve admitted.

“Oh,” George said in some surprise.

“I’m looking into starting a private club. Offering these services but not by me,” Steve said, watching George for his reaction. He was nodding in encouragement.

“That makes sense,” George said. “A place women and men can gather without feeling like they are slabs of beef. Where they can pay for company for only as long as they feel the need for it.”

“Precisely,” Steve said. “I’m looking at a couple of properties on Friday. If we do this, we’ll need a kitchen.”

George laughed at that. “You know you only have to call. Professional discount guaranteed.”
Steve nodded with a smile.

“We?” George said in question.

“A friend and I are going in together,” Steve explained.

“A friend?” George asked with a knowing smile.

Steve shrugged.

“This will be members only I take it?” George asked.

“Strictly members only,” Steve confirmed.

“What are you thinking for the fees?” George asked. Steve’s answer was momentarily delayed by the arrival of their food, everything picture perfect.

Steve gave him the rundown, George considering it as he sampled his dinner. “Do you think it’s too high?” Steve asked when George remained silent for longer than usual.

“On the contrary,” George said. “You may need to up the initiation fee. The monthly sounds right. Although including food will cut into your profit.”

“I called a couple of country clubs. They have mandatory monthly fees for food whether the members eat it or not. That seems… underhanded to me,” Steve said.

“Then have the members order from the menu and pay like a regular restaurant. You can comp meals to your guests, favorites, whatever,” George said.

“That’s true,” Steve said.

“What about spouses?” George asked.

“Spouses?” Steve repeated, confused by George’s question.

“Will the spouses of members be allowed to utilize your club?”

“Well,” Steve said, considering it as he sliced up his steamed asparagus. “My clients are either single or their spouses don’t know that I exist. That’s the official version at least. Spouses never figured into our thinking.”

“I can see why,” George laughed. “If I were married, I’d want my wife to be able to come eat dinner, use the spa, go swimming. If I visited for more personal reasons, well, that would be between the club and me.”

“The idea of spouses does complicate matters,” Steve said.

“You’ll no doubt want to discuss it with your partner.”

“I will,” Steve agreed. “Why do you think the initiation fee should be higher?”

“You need to recoup your investment as quickly as possible. Plus you need some setback for
emergencies, repairs. The monthly will help with those too but charging more upfront will give you a greater cushion. Someone who can afford $150,000 can afford $200,000,” George pointed out.

“That’s true,” Steve agreed.

“Provide a discount if they pay the initiation fee and the monthly fee in one lump sum. Give them a 10% discount on the monthly.”

“Is that what’s done?” Steve asked.

“Sometimes. Do you have a lawyer?”

“Yes,” Steve said. “We haven’t discussed this with anybody yet. It’s all very new.”

“It is a good idea,” George said. “And you can be certain I’ll join as soon as it’s open for business.”

“Current clients will receive a discount on the initiation fee,” Steve said. “And we will only accept members referred by current clients or personal friends.”

“Referrals is an excellent policy. Do you and your friend have experience running a club? Or a restaurant?”

“No but we’re quick studies. And we know people who know people. We’re not afraid to admit to the things we don’t know,” Steve said.

“It will also give you a place to employ people like you,” George said, quickly clarifying. “I mean, people who are looking for a place to belong. If you had had a mooring line tied to a place and its people, you wouldn’t have felt rudderless.”

“Do you sail?” Steve asked with a laugh.

“I haven’t in a while. I miss being on the water.”

“Do you have a boat?”

“Yeah,” George said. “Can you sail?”

“Yes,” Steve said. “If you want to go out sometime, I’ll be happy to go with you. For free.”

George laughed at his response, nodding. “I’d like that. Maybe next week?”

“I could go next Friday if you like,” Steve said.

“Thank you, Steve. That would be perfect. I’ll bring lunch and beer.” George told him where his boat was docked and they agreed to meet there at 9 a.m. next Friday. Steve was pretty sure Danny would be disappointed but he’d get over it. He’d bribe him with sex if he had to.

“We may have found a place by then. If you don’t mind, I’ll see if I can get the blueprints so we can discuss any changes to the kitchen.”

“Of course,” George agreed readily. “I know a first rate builder who does renovations. He’s fast and he’s excellent.”
“Once we’ve made a decision, I’d like to call him,” Steve said.

George was about to respond when he stopped to look up at the woman approaching the table. He stood, Steve following his example. To Steve’s surprise, the woman coming toward them was Governor Jameson.

“Mr. Deering,” the Governor said with a smile, reaching for George’s hand.

“Governor. It’s lovely to see you tonight,” George said with a broad smile.

“Thank you,” she said, glancing over at Steve.

“This is Steve,” George said, nodding to him.

“Steve,” the Governor said, considering him as she shook his hand. “Have we met?”

“I’ve never had the honor,” Steve said, hoping she didn’t connect him with his father.

“Still, you look familiar,” she said. “I certainly didn’t mean to interrupt, George. Are we still on for golf next Thursday?”

“Absolutely,” George agreed. “I’m very much looking forward to it.”

“I am as well,” she said. “Gentlemen.” With that, she turned to follow the hostess patiently waiting to escort her to a secluded table. When she arrived, the man already there stood to give her a light kiss on the cheek. Steve instantly recognized him as Hiro Noshimuri. Governor Jameson was close friends with the head of the Yakuza?

“I apologize,” George said, mistaking Steve’s silence for disapproval.

“There’s no need,” Steve assured him. “I wasn’t aware that you are friends with the Governor.”

“Good to have friends in high places,” George said with a wink.

“Indeed,” Steve agreed, chewing on his fish as he chewed on this new information.

With no further interruptions and only friendly conversation, they finished their exquisite meal, refusing dessert. George wasn’t able to acquire any of Steve’s “leftovers” but he didn’t seem to mind leaving the restaurant alone. Nor did he request any sexual favors from Steve. At the end of the meal, George confirmed their sailing date for the next Friday and waited amiably with Steve until their vehicles arrived.

Steve speculated that George thought of him now as a ‘real person’ not someone with whom he only shared sex and food. Steve felt that was a good thing but was confused by the unexpected turn of events.

“Hey,” he said when he had Danny on the phone.

“Hey SEAL boy. You’re done early,” Danny said.

“Yeah. George knows I’m a real human being now,” Steve said, still uncertain how he felt about
“Well,” Danny said. “I guess we all evolve, huh?”

“I guess,” Steve said. “I’m going sailing with him next Friday. For free. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Next Friday, huh?” Danny said. “I don’t mind but you’ll have to leave me your credit card.”

“Oh, I’m buying your indulgence,” Steve laughed.

“Yep. You are throwing me over on the one day a week we set aside just for ourselves,” Danny pointed out.

“I am,” Steve admitted. “And I’m doing it for free.”

“I know you enjoy sailing, babe. You not getting paid is going to cost you extra.”

Steve laughed at his threats. “I’ll also blow you to ensure your forgiveness. Turns out George is friends with Governor Jameson.”


“Yeah. And Jameson is friends with Hiro Noshimuri.”


“I’ve got one more for you,” Steve said. “George wanted to know if spouses were included in the membership.”

“Oh hell,” Danny said. “We never even considered that.”

“No we didn’t. George said he’d renovate the kitchen for a discount. He has a builder friend who can make any structural renovations we need. And he thinks we should charge $200,000 for the imitation fee.”

“I guess he’d know better than we would,” Danny said. “I found a couple of other estates on-line. I’ll show you when you get here.”

“Okay. I made appointments at the first one and two more.”

“Good,” Danny said. “How was dinner?”

“Unbelievable. We need to bribe Stanton Street’s chef to come work for us.”

“Once we have a place for him to work we’ll discuss it,” Danny agreed.

“Yeah,” Steve said. “I’m almost home.”

“Okay. See you shortly.”

Steve hung up, his head still filled with all that he’d learned. It was going to take some sorting to figure it out.
Danny was on the couch when Steve got home. He was studying his laptop, a baseball game playing on the TV. “Hello,” Danny said with a bright smile when Steve entered. “You are looking spectacular.”

“I’m sweltering,” Steve said, leaving his shoes by the door and flopping on the couch next to Danny.

Danny leaned down to kiss his forehead when Steve’s head had replaced his laptop. Danny unbuttoned his shirt without having to look at what he was doing. He could concentrate on Steve’s scrunched up but still beautiful face. “I’m sorry,”

Steve shrugged at that. “Spouses or no?”

“Most of the places I found on-line include families. In our case, that would be a moot point. No one under 21 allowed.”

“Exactly. Do your clients tell their spouses about you? Mine don’t.”

“I doubt it. Still, if we allow spouses, they can come swimming, eat at the restaurant. One of the properties I found has stables.”


“It’s almost $2 million. Do you think we can afford that?” Danny asked.

“I don’t know,” Steve said, closing his eyes. “My head hurts.”

“I bet it does,” Danny said. “If we charge $200,000, ten members would pay the mortgage.”

“We’d still have to pay the salaries.”

“We need a real accountant. Do you have one in your black book?”

Steve reached into his pocket to hand his phone up to Danny without opening his eyes. “We’re going to hire Jonathan. He was a quartermaster for the Air Force.”

“He’d be excellent at purchasing then,” Danny said. “Here. Barbara – CPA. Perfect.”

“Barbara,” Steve repeated. “I don’t know a Barbara.”

“She’s right here,” Danny said, showing Steve her contact information.

“I did not put her in my phone. When was it added?”

“Mmm… two weeks ago. On a Monday at noon,” Danny said.

“Monday at noon. That is Leroy. I wonder if Barbara is his wife,” Steve said.

“Could be. Why would one of your clients put his wife’s information in your phone?”

“Leroy has high blood pressure. His doctor told him he was a heart attack waiting to happen.”
“Lovely,” Danny said. “Barbara’s out. Let’s see…Jordon?”

“No. He’s a jerk.”

“Kelly?” Danny suggested.

“Kelly Brown or Kelly Orwell?” Steve asked.

“It’s a female Kelly.”

“Kelly Orwell. I like her a lot. We go dancing.”

Danny laughed at that. “She married?”

“I don’t know,” Steve admitted. “We never discuss it. I’ll call her tomorrow. And we need to talk to Stan soon. Chin too,” Steve said.

“Are you free tomorrow night?” Danny asked, checking Steve’s appointments. “Mmm… you have Blanche at 1:30 and you’re seeing Erick at 4:00.”

“Erick only takes an hour. Nothing after that, right?”

“Right,” Danny said. “I have an appointment at 9:00 and one at 2:00. That’s it for me.”

“I wonder if they are free tomorrow evening,” Steve said.

“Well…” Danny hedged. “I may have checked with them.”

“I see,” Steve laughed. “All right. Tomorrow is good.”

“Chin’s bringing his younger cousin Kono. She has a degree in hotel and resort management,” Danny said.

“That’s an excellent idea,” Steve said. “Can you pick up some steaks?”

“On my way home. You can char them when you get here.”

“I want crab legs,” Steve decided.

“Right now?” Danny laughed.

“No. They were on the menu. But I couldn’t see eating them there.”

“I can run by the market for some. Doesn’t matter how messy we are here.”

“Okay,” Steve said. “Crab legs and steak. Sounds like a good bribery dinner.”

“It totally does. I think I’ll make a key lime pie.”

“Make two,” Steve said, looking up at him with a blinding smile.

“Why do I spoil you when you don’t deserve it?”
Steve shrugged, trying hard to look innocent. “I let you take naked pictures of me.”

“Yeah, you do,” Danny had to agree. “A few of the ones I took are absolutely breathtaking. We’re going to have them blown up and use them as décor in the club.”

“Doesn’t that seem…egotistical to you?” Steve asked.

“You aren’t doing it. I am,” Danny said.

“Okay,” Steve said with a wave of his hand.

“I’m going to turn them into black and whites. Then they’ll be ‘art.’”

“Art, huh?”

“Yep, art,” Danny agreed. “Go up to bed. You can barely keep your eyes open. Probably too hard holding up all those ridiculous eyelashes of yours.”

“I can sleep right here while you finish the game,” Steve said.

“All right,” Danny said, running his fingers through Steve’s hair and massaging his scalp with light fingers.

“That feels good,” Steve sighed.

“That’s why I do it,” Danny said, his left hand resting on Steve’s chest, directly over his heart.

“Mmm…” Steve was already asleep.
Chin, Kono, and Stan come for dinner to discuss plans for Club Four-Four-Five. Chin and Steve have a separate conversation that raises far too many questions.

“I’d rather be in Las Vegas 104 degrees than New York 90 degrees, you know why? Legalized prostitution. In any weather that takes the edge off. ~ Ray Romano

Steve got home the next evening at 5:30. Danny was in the kitchen, working on dinner, filling the house with delicious smells.

“Hey babe,” Danny said, looking up to accept his kiss. “Go take a shower, please.”

“I’m sorry,” Steve said, sniffing his shirt. “I ask him not to smoke but he is the customer.”

“I know,” Danny said. “They’ll be here around 6:00 so you have some time.”

“Did you get crab legs?” Steve asked as he got a bottle of water out of the fridge.

“I did. I’ll put them in to boil when they get here.”

“Good,” Steve agreed. “I’ll be right down.”

“All right,” Danny said, watching him with a smile until he had disappeared from view. He returned to his dinner preparations, certain that Steve wouldn’t be long. He never lingered in the shower unless Danny was with him and slowed him down – on purpose.

Steve came looping back down the steps, detouring by the front door when the bell rang. He greeted Chin and his cousin, inviting them in. Danny came out of the kitchen to greet them as well.

“This is my cousin Kono,” Chin said. “Steve and Danny.”

Kono smiled brightly at Steve and Danny. “I’m happy to meet you. Chin talks about you all the time.”

“Most of it’s lies,” Steve assured her.

She gave them a dimpled smile, shrugging one slender shoulder.

“Come in,” Danny said, leading them into the kitchen. “What can we get you to drink?”

“I’ll have a beer,” Chin said, accepting a frosty one from Steve.
“I’ll have one too,” Kono requested. Steve handed her one after taking off the lid, setting a third near Danny. “Chin told me you’re thinking of opening your own club.”

“That’s our plan,” Steve said. “It will be private. Membership by referrals only. We want to have a full spa, a restaurant, and more personal services.”

“You’ll be successful,” Kono said with a nod. “The island needs places that are not overrun with tourists.”

“That’s not specifically why we’re doing it,” Danny said. “But that is a good point.”

“Do you know yet where it’ll be?” Kono asked.

“We’re looking at three properties on Friday,” Steve said. “Have you met Stan Edwards?”

“I haven’t but Chin said he was coming,” Kono said.

“Since we don’t have ‘real’ jobs, we can’t get a mortgage from a bank,” Danny said. “Stan will hopefully help us with the financing.”

“That’s him now,” Steve said when the bell rang again. He went to open the door, inviting Stan to come into the kitchen.

“Thank you for having me over,” Stan said after giving Steve the very fine bottle of wine he’d brought with him.

Chin introduced Kono, Stan stating he was delighted to meet her. Chin had talked about her when they had been golfing. Turned out that Stan and Chin made excellent golf partners and Stan had invited Chin to join him several times since they had all been.

“And he rarely ever curses,” Stan said with a laugh. “I don’t mind but some of the other members can be old fashioned.”

Chin smiled at the description. “I’ve found yelling at the ball does very little to make it go where you want.”

“This is why we call you the Zen master,” Kono said, elbowing Chin good-naturedly.

“Oh huh,” Chin said, skeptical.

“Babe, will you char the steaks?” Danny asked with a smile just for Steve.

“Done,” Steve agreed, taking them outside. As he was putting them on the grill, Chin wandered out with his beer and a fresh one for Steve.

“You look like a man with something on your mind,” Steve said, drinking from the beer.

“And Danny says you have no interpersonal communication skills,” Chin said.

“Danny says a lot of things,” Steve reminded him. “God love him.”

“He can be garrulous,” Chin had to agree. “I met with the Lieutenant Governor today.”
“Officially?” Steve asked, studying Chin.

“No, not officially,” Chin confirmed. “Seems Billy Harrington paid him a visit. Officially. He came to lodge a formal complaint against you.”

“Against me?” Steve said. “Why would Billy complain to Sam about me? Sam has no authority over me even if I’d done something to piss off Billy.”

“That’s what I asked Denning. Billy asked that he ‘talk some sense into you.’ That you need to stop pursuing your vendetta against Hiro Noshimuri.”

“My vendetta?” Steve repeated. “What vendetta?”

“That’s what I said. And Denning confirmed to me that you never mentioned him. All we can figure is that someone is trying to make it look like you are going after Noshimuri.”

“To what ends?” Steve asked. “I’ve never shared more than a sentence with the man.”

“Did you know that when your mother was killed, there was some speculation that it was the Yakuza that arranged the bombing?” Chin asked.


“It’s possible that the bomb was meant for your mother,” Chin said.

“That’s nonsense,” Steve said. “She was a schoolteacher. There was no reason for the Yakuza to even know she existed.”

“Unless it was to warn your father off,” Chin said.

“Off of what?”

“That’s what we’re not sure of,” Chin said. “There must be some tie between the Yakuza and Victor Hesse. Had you ever heard that possibility?”

“There were rumblings but nothing of any substance,” Steve said as he turned the steaks. “Is Billy working for Hiro? Is that why he’s so interested in my supposed vendetta against a man I’ve met once?”

“I don’t know,” Chin said. “Does Billy know you see Sam on a personal level?”

“Not as far as I know. We’re very careful. He changes locations frequently. He watches to make sure he’s not followed. If Billy knows, he’s sneakier than I give him credit for.”

“Then why would Billy ask Sam to call you off?” Chin asked.

“That is an excellent question,” Steve said. “What did Sam say?”

“He has no idea. Billy didn’t act like he knew that you were more than a former SEAL to Sam. Sam asked Billy why he had come. Billy said he’d heard that Sam was close to your father and maybe he could talk some sense into you.”
“My father?” Steve repeated. “Dad never mentioned Sam to me. He did talk about the Governor periodically. Didn’t much trust her but couldn’t say why. Last night I had dinner with a client. Jameson came to the same restaurant, to meet Hiro Noshimuri for dinner.”

“The Governor was meeting with Hiro?” Chin asked, not pleased with the news.

“Seems odd to me too,” Steve agreed.

“Did Hiro see you?” Chin asked.

“Probably. The Governor is friends with my client. They chatted for a few minutes then she went to the table where Hiro was waiting. I didn’t speak to him.”

“It makes no sense,” Chin said. “You didn’t pick the restaurant. You couldn’t have known Hiro was there. You got there before him, right?”

“I must have done. I didn’t see him come in but the Governor came in when we were nearly finished. What did Billy say to Sam exactly?”

“That he should tell you that it would be wise for you to leave Hiro Noshimuri alone.”

“I do leave him alone,” Steve said, nearly laughing. “I think Billy stood too close to one too many grenades.”

“Do you want me to pay Billy a visit?” Chin asked.

“No. Danny and I will do it. This is ridiculous. I can’t abandon a vendetta I don’t have. If Billy is working for Hiro, that’s his business. But threatening me is my business.”

“All right,” Chin agreed.

“I think Danny and I will also call on Tua. See if he has any insight he can provide,” Steve said.

“Will he see you?” Chin asked. “He said your debt was squared.”

“We’ll see if we can’t unbalance the ledger so he’ll speak with us.”

“I have no idea what that means,” Chin admitted.

Steve shrugged at Chin’s statement. “Any news on Kaleo?”

“He’s being assigned the worst cases possible,” Chin said in satisfaction. “Can’t imagine why that would have happened.”

“Me neither,” Steve agreed with an ugly smile. “Hey,” he said when the others came down to where he and Chin were standing guard over the steaks.

“Your idea is monumental,” Stan said. “Some of the guys at the Club said they wished there was a place less public they could go, to eat and drink without having to discuss business all the time.”

“You told him everything?” Steve asked Danny.
“Every detail,” Danny confirmed.

“And?” Steve prompted.

“I’m confident I can secure you financing,” Stan said. “From what Danno tells me, you have enough reserves to prove that you are solvent.”

“Danno?” Steve mouthed to Danny.

Danny made an ‘I’ll tell you later’ motion knowing there was no way to avoid explaining.

“Once you find a place you feel is suitable, we’ll discuss the next steps,” Stan assured them.

“Excellent,” Steve said.

“And Kono has agreed to work as Assistant Manager for six months. After that, she’ll no doubt be promoted to manager,” Danny announced.

“I had no idea Chin and I were out here long enough for that many decisions to be made,” Steve laughed. “Welcome aboard.”

“Thanks,” Kono said. “I have to give four weeks notice at the hotel where I’ve been working.”

“That’s understandable,” Steve said. “We’ll need at least that long to get all the wheels in motion.”

“Steve said you guys have cousins that will fill the other openings – housekeeping, security, pool boys, waiters, waitresses,” Danny said.

“Of course we do,” Chin agreed.

“Good,” Steve said. “We’ll start hiring as soon as we have a place.”

“Don’t get too far ahead of yourselves,” Stan said. “It will probably take six to eight months to open.”

“We understand that,” Danny said. “But we want to hire the core staff now so they feel like partners.”

“How many?” Chin asked.

“I’m going to talk to a friend who just left the Air Force. He was in supplies,” Steve said, looking at Danny.

“We need an accountant. We’re talking to one next week,” Danny said, considering all the things that had to be done.

“You’ll need a lawyer,” Stan reminded them.

“We have that covered,” Steve assured him.

“Apply for the liquor license as soon as you can,” Kono advised. “They can take eight to twelve
“Right,” Steve said. “We’ll do that as soon as we’re incorporated.”

“What are you calling this club?” Chin asked.

“The Four-Four-Five Club,” Danny said.

“Why?” Chin asked, echoing the question that Stan and Kono also had.

“It’s a special number to us,” Danny said. “No particular reason. We think it resonates.”

“It’s good,” Kono said. “Easy to remember but distinct. Easy to spell. You need to get the phone number to have 445 in it.”

“Right,” Steve agreed. “We’ll need phones.”

“And stuff,” Danny laughed. “Lots of stuff.”

“Have you started the master list yet?” Stan asked.

“In our heads. We ought to write it down,” Danny acknowledged.

“I have some sample business plans,” Kono said. “I’ll be glad to email them to you. They won’t be exactly what you’re planning but they will give you a basis to start.”

“Thank you,” Steve said warmly. “That would be great.”

“Did you want to ask about your salary?” Chin asked Kono. He knew they would never cheat her but she needed to have that information.

“We already discussed it, cuz,” Kono assured him. “They’re going to pay me more than my job now plus they are giving me an equity share.”

“We are?” Steve asked, staring over at Danny.

“Yep, we sure are,” Danny agreed.

“Huh,” Steve said, turning the steaks.

“It was my idea,” Stan said, taking a step back away from Steve. “Builds loyalty. Provide them a share in the business and they’ll make sure it’s a success.”

“That makes sense,” Steve had to agree.

They discussed the myriad of other details, Kono a fount of ideas especially about those things that they would have never considered. At one point, Danny had no choice but to go inside and fetch his iPad. There were so many ideas flying around, he knew they would never remember half of them.

It was after midnight when Chin, Kono, and Stan finally said goodnight. They agreed to meet again Sunday after Steve and Danny had looked at the first properties. They would discuss whether they thought they were suitable. If they found any that looked promising, Chin, Kono, and Stan would
visit with them before any decision was made.

“Well,” Steve said when they were by themselves. “My head’s swimming. How about you?”

“To say the least,” Danny agreed.

“Sam told Chin that Billy paid him a visit,” Steve said as they were locking up.

“Yeah?” Danny responded, looking over his shoulder to judge Steve’s reaction to this. Danny didn’t know what to make of Steve’s expression – not yet at least.

“Billy lodged a ‘formal complaint’ against me,” Steve said, complete with air quotes.

“That makes no sense,” Danny said. “In what capacity does Sam have authority over you?”

“I have no idea. Neither does Sam. But Billy told Sam I needed to give up my vendetta against Hiro Noshimuri.”

“There you go again. Harboring secret vendettas against people you barely know without telling me,” Danny scolded, each word dripping in sarcasm.

“I have one against you. Did I remember to tell you?”

“You are more likely to have one against me for using too much dish detergent than you are against Hiro,” Danny said.

“Sam knows that. That’s why he told Chin. Unofficially. I told Chin we were going to pay Billy a visit.”

“You and Chin?”

“No, me and my boyfriend,” Steve said, pulling Danny into his embrace to kiss his neck.

“This boyfriend? Is he a SEAL too?” Danny laughed.

“More like a…turtle,” Steve decided.

“A turtle? In what way am I like a turtle?”

“How do you know I mean you? Maybe I mean one of my myriad of other boyfriends,” Steve said, kissing Danny’s no doubt indignant answer from his mouth.

“I’m the only person crazy enough to put up with you,” Danny reminded him, returning his kiss.

“Oh, is that right, Danno?” Steve asked.

Danny sighed and shook his head. “You’re going to call me that no matter what now, aren’t you?”

“Probably,” Steve admitted. “What’s it mean?”

“When…Grace was trying to say my name, that’s all that came out. It was her name for me. Stan started calling me that too,” Danny said. “I don’t mind if you want to.”
“Are you sure?” Steve replied, sorry that he’d asked. “If it hurts you, I’d never do it.”

“I have to continue to move on, to let the past rest. And if you calling me *Danno* keeps a tiny bit of Grace alive, how is that a bad thing?”

“Okay,” Steve said. “But if you change your mind….”

“I know, SEAL boy. You’d never intentionally hurt my feelings.”

“Nope. And I’ll take out anyone who does,” Steve reminded him.

“As I am aware,” Danny confirmed. “Let’s go to bed.”

“Sounds good,” Steve agreed.

“When are we going to see Billy?” Danny asked as they went up and into their bedroom to change.

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “We need to start taking off more than one day a week. We’ll never get everything done if we don’t.”

“I’m not the one going sailing next Friday,” Danny reminded him.

“You don’t know how to sail,” Steve said with a laugh.

“How do you know? Maybe I was captain of the Rutgers regatta team.”

“Rutgers is landlocked,” Steve said. “Also? I’m confident Rutgers does *not* have a regatta team.”

“Whatever,” Danny said with a wave, going into the bathroom before Steve could claim it.

When they were curled together in bed, Steve recounted the rest of his conversation with Chin. Danny was mulling it over, agreeing with Steve’s assessment that none of it made sense. Why would the Yakuza want either of his parents killed? What threat were they to the underworld? Steve suggested that the answers might be contained in the mysteries of the champ box, Danny agreeing they would look into it in their free time.
Not The House For Us

Chapter Summary

Steve and Danny look at three estates but fail to find the perfect place for Club Four-Four-Five.

*The only way to stop this trafficking in and profiting from the use of women's bodies is for prostitution to be legalized. Legalization will open it up to regulation; and regulation means safety.* ~ Jeanette Angell.

On Friday, they met the real estate agent at her office promptly at 8:00 a.m. Danny complained about the early hour, especially since it’d been 2:30 a.m. before he got home Thursday night. Steve promised to make it up to him with a nap and other *incentives*. Danny agreed, providing the ‘incentives’ included Steve being naked. Steve happily confirmed that fact as they left the house, Danny holding tight to his precious cup of coffee.

They were scheduled to look at three properties still. But the first one Steve had spotted had gone under contract. The realtor said that she’d found a substitute property that was nearly its equal and they had agreed to visit it instead.

The realtor was in her office waiting when they arrived. She was a short woman, no more than five feet if she stood up on her toes, with a cascade of unruly red curls that tumbled all around her face. She introduced herself as Hannah Norwick, delighted to meet the two men interested in the estates they were scheduled to visit. She talked more than Danny had ever dreamed of, barely listening to anything either man said. She assured them that all three listings were “MLS, or part of the multiple listing service to those not in the biz.” This meant, naturally, that any properties they may express an interest in any time in the future could also be handled by her.

“Not in the biz,” Danny mouthed to Steve whose eyes were wide and nearly frightened.

“Oh my fucking God,” Steve mouthed back, wondering if he could set fire to the building next door to facilitate their escape. The real estate office was in a brand new high rise, all too-shiny chrome and polished glass. The tiny building next door had been a flower market but the owners of the new monstrosity had convinced town hall to close down the market, citing… something or other. Hannah Norwick couldn’t remember precisely the reason but she was certain the flower market posed a health risk to the important people working in the new building.

“No doubt,” Danny said although he was pretty sure she hadn’t paused long enough to hear him.

They said they would follow her to the properties, unable to conceive of spending the morning trapped in a car with her. If she thought their choice was odd, she didn’t shoehorn that opinion into her conversation.

Certain they had the first address in case they got separated, she bound with great energy into her convertible Mini Cooper, putting a sturdy rubber band in her hair to tame it. That done, she drove far
too fast through downtown. Steve wasn’t able to keep up and he’d been known to drive on the sidewalk if the situation warranted it. Danny reminded him repeatedly that no situation warranted anyone driving on the sidewalk but Steve chose to ignore him.

They left town behind them, driving into the foothills where the first property was located. It was the smallest of the houses but had to most land attached to it. This one had an horizon pool like the original estate did. Danny declared they were installing an horizon pool wherever they ended up, if this property wasn’t the one for them.

“Do you know how much they cost?” Steve asked as he negotiated a particularly tight curve on the road that pretended to be paved.

“You’re the one who suggested we pay a million dollars to open a whorehouse. And now you want to quibble about the cost of a pool?” Danny said, incredulous that he was even having this conversation.

Steve shrugged at the accusation, smiling over at Danny knowing that would help ensure his forgiveness.

“Eyes on the road, speed racer,” Danny said, not as immune to Steve’s flirting as he liked to pretend.

With a minimum of fuss, they arrived at the estate. The view was breathtaking, the grounds around the structure holding promise with care and maintenance.

“They simply couldn’t keep it up,” Hannah informed Steve and Danny when they had left the truck. She was looking at the gardens with pity, shaking her head, her hair now free to whip about. “One of the reasons they are looking to sell.”

“How long have they been gone?” Danny asked, looking at the low house at the end of an unkempt path.

“Six months,” Hannah said. “Found a darling little condo. So much better for people of their advanced age, you know. They loved it here but it was too much.”

Danny was nodding, Steve looking around like he expected ninjas to come pouring out of the low-lying shrubs any second.

“Should we take a look inside?” Hannah asked brightly. “Immaculate. They have it tended each week. Air it out. You know,” she said as she led them up to the front door. Through her realtor magic, she got the double front doors open to a bright foyer, floor to ceiling windows flooding it with natural light. The fresh flowers in one corner seemed to attract the sunshine, petals almost glowing. “Through here is the grand room,” she said, turning left to show them the formal living room. It took up most of the front of the house, more floor to ceiling windows. It was large enough that the two couches and four easy chairs did not overwhelm the room. There was also a huge TV mounted to one wall, which Hannah said the owners were willing to leave. “Much too large for their current home.”

Steve and Danny nodded, dutifully following her to the back of the house, admiring the horizon pool accessed through the sitting room. There was an extra large mudroom that would serve as a changing room to anyone swimming. Further on was the large kitchen, every surface gleaming and polished. Danny was impressed with the house until she took them to see the bedrooms. They were tiny. Even though there were five of them, there was no master suite. There were only two full baths. Danny
remarked about the undersized bedrooms and the lack of bathrooms.

“I don’t know,” Hannah admitted. “Between you, me and the lamppost, I think that’s the reason the house hasn’t sold. Who wants a house with no master suite and only two bathrooms?”

“It is unfortunate,” Danny agreed, looking up at Steve who was frowning. Danny knew that look. “This isn’t the house for us.” Maybe that would get them outside before Steve could find a way to set fire to it. He hadn’t said two words since they’d walked in. He hated it, that was crystal clear to Danny.

“I understand,” she agreed reluctantly. “You have the address for the next, right?”

“We do,” Danny assured her, following her out. “We’ll meet you there.”

She nodded as she locked up the house, barely noticing when they got in the truck so Steve could drive far too fast away from the house.

“Was it haunted? Is that why you hate it so much?” Danny asked as the scenery whizzed by at an alarming speed.

“It was ugly.” And that was all he said.

Danny just nodded and looked out his window. He had no idea Steve had such firm ideas about architecture. Huh.

The next property was marginally better. At least the four bedrooms were inhabitable in size. But the house was, as Danny put it, ehh. Not great. Nothing special. They appreciated that it came with almost four acres but that wasn’t enough of a selling point for either of them.

The third property was by far the best of the three – large, airy rooms, a huge kitchen, three and a half acres. It was out, however. The long winding driveway started directly across the street from a playground for the local elementary school. There was no way they were going to risk placing their private club that close to a school. It would be disastrous for so many reasons.

Hannah couldn’t quite understand their concerns about the school, telling them it was always top rated and if they adopted children, it would be perfect.

“I’m sure it would,” Danny said. “But we don’t plan to adopt. This property isn’t for us.”

“All right,” she sighed, seeing a big fat commission check slip through her highly manicured fingers.

“Thank you for your time,” Danny said, shaking her hand. He elbowed Steve who also shook hands before practically fleeing to the truck.

“Babe,” Danny said when he had climbed in.

“I’m sorry,” Steve said, leaning a little closer when they were safely within the confines of the truck. “Are my ears bleeding?”

Danny laughed, kissing him in front of his right ear. “No, you goof. I’ll call a different agent tomorrow.”
“I like this house,” Steve said before reluctantly starting the engine to drive back down to town.

“Me too. But it’s not for us.”

“No it’s not,” Steve agreed.

“I’m going to look at a couple of properties on Friday while you are sailing. I’m not risking taking you to burn them down.”

“The first house deserved it.”

Danny shook his head, wondering what it was that Steve hated so much. Maybe Steve didn’t even know. “I want Thai food.”

“Okay,” Steve agreed, driving more sedately through the outskirts of town. “We need to incorporate.”

“I printed out the forms we need. Once we have them signed and notarized, we can turn them in. I put Four-Four-Five, LLC for the company name.”

“Good,” Steve agreed. “When we get home from meeting with Billy, we can finish going over the business plans Kono sent us.”

“Sounds good,” Danny said, leaving the truck when Steve had it parked at their favorite restaurant. “I was looking through the champ box while you were out yesterday.”

“Yeah?” Steve said, greeting the hostess who smiled back at them both. “How are you, Meekia?”

“Excellent,” she responded as she always did. She led them to the secluded booth where they usually sat, promising to bring them tea and ice water right away.

“Chin got me all the records concerning the bombing of the car. And the reports from your father’s murder,” Danny said quietly. Those were never easy words to say, to anyone. “There are some inconsistencies in both.”

“What kind of inconsistencies?” Steve asked before smiling up at their usual waitress. “Hi.”

“My two favorite boys,” Cecelia said with a laugh. She was always happy to see them and the fact that she was old enough to be their mother did nothing to curtail their flirting. “What looks good to you?”

“Besides you?” Danny said with a grin.

She snorted at him, taking his menu he hadn’t looked at. “The usual, haole?”

“You know it,” he agreed.

“What about you, sweet-cheeks?” she asked Steve.

“Shrimp I think,” he said, glancing over at Danny who was frowning. “No garlic.”

She laughed at that and promised she’d be right back with their garlic-less meals.
“The official version is that Victor Hesse was alone when he killed John,” Danny said. “But buried in the report was the fact that there was a second set of foot prints. All it said was that they were combat boots, most likely from North Korea.”

“North Korea,” Steve repeated with a frown. “What kind of sense does that make?”

“The bomb that killed your mother could also have had Korean origins. It was hard to tell because it was built to incinerate itself and whatever it was attached to. Those are most often found in North Korea or China.”

Steve shook his head, trying to absorb what Danny had said. “If it was the Yakuza, why not Japanese?”

“That’s what I thought,” Danny agreed. “When I was researching the bomb listed as likely to be the one that was on the car, guess whose name popped up more than once?”

“Hiro Noshimuri?” Steve said.

Danny shook his head. “Wo Fat.”

“Wo Fat?” Steve repeated. “He’s an arms dealer?”

“If you need him to be. If you need drugs, he’ll do that. From what I found, he’ll use his plentiful influence and connections to take care of any illegal activity you might have in mind. The Yakuza aren’t above murdering to rid themselves of enemies but they prefer to contract it out when they can. Keeps their hands cleaner.”

“And they contract it with Wo Fat?”

“That’s what I’m piecing together,” Danny said. “I found an obscure reference to Makaha and his antipathy toward Wo Fat. Makaha had the money but Wo Fat had the connections. Makaha worried that Wo Fat would strangle his pipeline.”

“Makaha was going to take out Wo Fat?”

“Why were you protecting Makaha? You know, before you killed him.”

“He had gotten threats from unknown sources,” Steve said, pulling out his regular phone. He thumbed through the photos until he found the six he needed. “These notes showed up on the windshield of his car. His compound was wired and guarded but they were placed on his windshield in the span of two weeks. He suspected an insider but security tapes didn’t show anyone approaching the cars. It was weird.”

“What do they say?” Danny asked, studying the papers with Asian characters on them.

“The usual – your life is meaningless. Your business will come to a sudden stop like your life,” Steve said, looking at the photos. “This one says ‘you are lower than the rear of an ass.’”

“Is that an especially foul insult?” Danny asked, thinking it sounded stupid rather than threatening.

“I don’t think so,” Steve said with a shrug.
“Did you find out who was behind the notes?”

“I found out about him trafficking minors first.”

“And that’s when you killed him,” Danny said.

“Yes,” Steve said. “I’m not sorry he’s dead. But it does make my life a little more complicated.”

“Tua will make sure nothing happens to you,” Danny reminded him as Cecilia returned with their lunches, steaming and delicious. “Thank you, love.”

“Anything else right now?” she asked with a saucy wink.

“Marry me?” Danny requested.

“Next week,” she said as she always did, laughing as she left them to their meals.

“You think Wo Fat was behind my father’s murder?” Steve asked, mulling it over.

“I think John thought Hiro Noshimuri was very dangerous,” Danny said, lowering his voice slightly. There was no one close by but he still didn’t want to risk being overheard. “What beef did Hesse have with John? You said there was no connection, right? Victor was a gun for hire when it suited him.”

“Yes,” Steve agreed, contemplating Danny’s words and his own noodles. “That’s why we were after Anton.”

“Not to jump to any conclusions, but I’m beginning to think Victor took out John on Wo Fat’s orders.”

“And Wo Fat wanted him gone because the Yakuza ordered it?” Steve asked.

“That’s the only thing that makes sense to me,” Danny said. “The bits and pieces in the box all point to John’s investigation of Hiro, not Wo Fat. I can’t find any evidence that John even knew about Wo Fat. Why then would Wo Fat kill him except on someone else’s orders?”

“Which would also explain why Hiro is so paranoid about me having a vendetta against him,” Steve said.

“Exactly. You killed Makaha while you were assigned to guard him. To Hiro’s eyes, you would need very little provocation to take him out next,” Danny said.

“I wonder if Tua knows about my supposed vendetta against Hiro.”

“Weren’t we going to ask him that?” Danny reminded him.

“Hmmm…” Steve said, glancing at his watch. “Maybe I’ll give Tua a call once we’re back in the truck.”

“You think the walls have ears?” Danny asked cautiously.
“I do. I know you think I’m paranoid,” Steve said, giving Danny one of his plump shrimp, cooked perfectly.

“Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they aren’t out to get you,” Danny said.

“Exactly. Do you have any secret vendettas?” Steve asked with a laugh.

“I have one against Sam, for introducing us,” Danny claimed.

“Uh huh. Who else?”

“I can’t tell you that. They wouldn’t be secret if I did.”

Steve shrugged, pulling out his phone when it vibrated in his pocket. “Hi,” he said with a smile. ‘Sam’ he mouthed to Danny.

“Steve,” Sam said, sounding a little on edge but not necessarily upset. “I’m sorry I had to cancel Wednesday.”

“Me too. Everything work out all right with the legislators?”

“It did,” Sam said. “Chin Ho told me he’d talked to you.”

“He did,” Steve confirmed. “Danny and I are going to talk to Billy at 1:30. We hope to convince him to set up an appointment for us to meet with Hiro.”

“That’s a good idea,” Sam agreed. “I asked some very discreet questions about the Governor and Hiro. It’s acknowledged they are friends. The Governor says that Hiro has brought industry to Hawaii and is a cornerstone of the economic growth.”

“Does she know he’s Yakuza?” Steve asked.

“I couldn’t get an answer to that. It’s hard to ask anyone if the top ranking official in Hawaii is in bed with the head of the local Japanese underworld.”

“I can see how that would be a diplomatic challenge,” Steve agreed.

“Indeed,” Sam said. “In the good news column, I talked to the chair of the liquor board. You and Danny will have your license six weeks from the date you turn in your official application.”

“That’s excellent news,” Steve said. “We won’t be nearly ready by then but at least it will be in place when we are.”

“Precisely. The chair said that two other applications had been rejected outright, opening a spot for yours. You’re filing for incorporation soon, right?”

“Next week,” Steve confirmed. “We’ll send you copies of all the forms when we have them signed and certified.”

“Good,” Sam agreed. “Send me the liquor license application and I’ll make sure it’s complete. Then I’ll deliver it to him personally.”
“Is he wondering why you are taking such an interest in our business?”

“Because you are a fellow veteran,” Sam reminded him. “Jonathan sent me an email a couple of days ago.”

“I haven’t heard from him since Monday. Is everything okay?”

“Absolutely,” Sam said. “He wanted to tell me how excited he was about working for you.”

“When did I start reporting to you?” Steve laughed.

“I have no idea,” Sam admitted. “Jonathan and I have crossed paths several times. It’s not all about you.”

“It should be,” Steve claimed.

“I’m sure it should,” Sam said, laughing. “Please call me after you meet with Billy.”

“Right. Since you are the boss of me now,” Steve said.

“Exactly. Except if I were your boss, I’d fire you for being such a smart ass.”

“Noted,” Steve laughed. “You want to tell Danny all my faults?”

“That would take too long. But I will say hello,” Sam agreed, a smile in his voice.

Steve handed Danny his phone, using Danny’s preoccupation to steal some of his steamed broccoli. Danny frowned at him and stabbed at his hand with his chopsticks. It wasn’t long before he hung up, returning the phone to Steve.

“Are we going to be late to see Billy?” Danny asked as he ate more of his food.

“We have plenty of time,” Steve assured him. “You’re going to start keeping Thursdays clear, right?”

“I am,” Danny confirmed. “I have appointments the next two Thursdays but that will be it. You?”

“I have two next week. None the week after.”

“Good,” Danny said. “I hope one of the estates I’m seeing next Friday will work out.”

“Me too. But there’s still time. We can put the other pieces in place while we’re looking for the perfect location,” Steve assured him.

“Yeah,” Danny agreed. “We need uniforms for the staff.”

“Khaki pants or shorts. Aqua blue polo shirts,” Steve said as though they had previously discussed it.

“That shade of aqua?” Danny asked, licking his lips.

“Yep. The one that’s your favorite. You and I won’t wear the uniform but everywhere you look, that blue will be around you.”
“Yay me,” Danny said. “Docksiders for shoes?”

“I think. Don’t you?”

“Makes sense. Will Kono wear the uniform?” Danny asked.

“At first. Until she’s promoted to manager. Then she’ll wear white shirts and black pants or skirts.”

“Or shorts,” Danny said with a frown.

“Shorts aren’t professional enough.”

“Hmmm… that’s rich coming from you, Mr. Cargo Pants.”

Steve shrugged at his words. What was the point of trying to deny it? “We’ll provide the uniforms. Have them cleaned.”

“That will be a nice perk.”

“We need a logo. Any of your clients in graphic arts?” Steve asked.

“Mmm…” Danny said, considering the question. “Grant works in advertising. He must either have graphic arts abilities or people who do.”

“You’ll ask him?” Steve requested.

“Of course. Do you know what you want it to look like?” Danny asked.

“No clue. If you think he’ll do a good job, let him decide.”

“He can give us a handful of samples. Then we’ll decide with Kono,” Danny decided.

“Makes sense. We also need a website.”

“Good God, babe. Let’s stay hookers,” Danny said, shaking his head.

Steve laughed at him. “The website doesn’t have to be elaborate. Just a portal, where they can make reservations.”

“All right. I’ll ask Grant for any recommendations he might have.”

“We need computers for the club,” Steve said. “Does your friend Toast still work for that company?”

“I think so?” Danny said. “I’ll check and see. I don’t know that he can get us a discount but it’s worth a phone call.”

“If we need, what, a dozen computers, surely we can get a discount,” Steve said.

“Will a dozen be enough?” Danny asked, uncertain.

“I can ask Jonathan. He’ll have an idea. We need to have Kono and Jonathan meet. Have the first
meeting of the stake holders.”

“What time will you be finished sailing next Friday?” Danny asked.

“I don’t know. I’ll be home by dinner. We can invite them over. We’ll ask Chin and Stan to come too.”

That decided, they finished their lunch, paying and over-tipping as always. Steve called Tua when they were in the truck. His assistant or bodyguard or whoever said he would relay the message to Tua as soon as he was free. Steve agreed with Danny that they probably wouldn’t hear back and Steve would call again until he reached Tua personally.
They find the perfect house. But first they talk to Billy about vendettas and the lack thereof.

*I urge you all today, especially today during these times of chaos and war, to love yourself without reservations and to love each other without restraint. Unless you’re into leather.* — Margaret Cho

They arrived at the building that housed Billy’s security firm, going up in the elevator to the fourth floor.

“You ever done it in an elevator?” Danny asked, looking at all the spotless mirrors reflecting back at them.

Steve lifted one eyebrow, not otherwise responding. Danny was still laughing when the elevator glided to a stop.

Steve opened the glass door to Billy’s office, stopping by the receptionist’s desk. “Hi Molly,” he said, the woman looking up at him. Her expression was trepidation mixed with…hunger, Danny decided.

“Steve,” she said, looking from him to Danny and back.

“This is Danny,” Steve said. “We have an appointment with Billy at 1:30.”

“Yes,” she said, still staring up at Steve.

The awkward silence was broken when Billy appeared from behind a wooden door, looking from Steve to Molly then back to Steve. “Come inside,” Billy said, standing aside so Steve and Danny could enter his really, really big office. “No phone calls for the next twenty minutes,” Billy told Molly who nodded, watching the three men disappear.

“Thank you for seeing us,” Danny said, taking one of the plush chairs by a small round table, Steve sitting next to him. Danny hadn’t been formally introduced to Billy but that seemed redundant by this point.

“Can I get you some water? Coffee?” Billy asked in a blankly polite voice.

“Nothing for me,” Danny said. He nudged Steve with his foot, Steve staring at Billy in disapproval.

“No,” Steve said, watching Billy sit at the table with them. “Lieutenant Governor Denning has no authority over me.”

“That’s debatable,” Billy said.
“What authority does he exert over Steve?” Danny asked.

“We’re all adults. Let’s lay our cards on the table,” Billy said. “I know the two of you have been involved with Denning. That’s your business. I can’t prove it and wouldn’t even if I could. Watching out for Hiro Noshimuri is my business. And you are a threat to him.”

“See,” Danny said, waving one hand. “See, this right here is what makes zero sense. Neither of us has a vendetta against anyone. Steve’s met Hiro twice. Twice. How does that constitute a vendetta?”

“I have it on good authority that you are planning to take him down,” Billy said, speaking directly to Steve.

“We’ve been through this,” Steve said. “I have no interest in Noshimuri. I can’t make it any clearer. And unless you have proof otherwise, I recommend you stop throwing around false accusations.”

“Why were you at Stanton Street with him?” Billy asked.

“If you’re tailing me, you know I was eating with George Deering. I had no way of knowing Noshimuri was there. If I had known, it wouldn’t have mattered. George chose the restaurant. I met him there. That’s the end of the story.”

“What did you say to Noshimuri?” Billy demanded.

“I didn’t say anything. I didn’t speak to him,” Steve said firmly.

“This is not what my sources reported,” Billy argued.

“Your sources are wrong. I ate dinner. I said hello to the Governor who is friends with George. She was meeting Noshimuri for dinner. I never left the table until George and I finished eating. I drove straight home.”

“Where I was waiting for him. He’d have told me if he had talked to Noshimuri. Why are you so adamant that Steve is harboring this vendetta when it’s clearly untrue?” Danny asked.

“My sources said…”

“Sources,” Steve said like the word was tainted. “Who?”

“You know I can’t tell you,” Billy retorted.

“But you are willing to take this mysterious person’s word over Steve’s? Didn’t you serve together? Did Steve ever lie to you? Steve is many things – mostly good. But he is not dishonest,” Danny said.

“I trusted you when we were SEALs,” Billy said. “That changed when you killed Makaha.”

“Did I lie about that?” Steve demanded. “I could have cast the blame elsewhere. There are enough people on this island who wanted him dead. I did them a favor. I never lied about pulling the trigger.”

Danny was nodding at that, looking over at Billy. ‘Your play’ was written all over Danny’s face.
“Noshimuri is a much bigger fish,” Billy said.

“So?” Steve replied. “I don’t have any interest in Noshimuri. None. How many more times am I going to have to tell you that?”

“We’d like you to arrange a meeting with Noshimuri,” Danny said, leaning forward to make sure Billy was listening. “The four of us need to talk, clear the air. If Noshimuri thinks Steve is after him, what better way to dispel that erroneous impression than a face-to-face in broad daylight. He chooses where, when, and whomever else he wants there. You, me, and Steve talk with him. Put this matter to rest once and for all.”

Billy slowly nodded. “I’ll call him. Even though my sources….”

“Your sources are the ones with a vendetta,” Danny interrupted. “They want you to take out Steve.”

Billy looked at Danny and frowned.

“You hadn’t considered that,” Danny said, seeing the truth on Billy’s face.

“You aren’t getting your information from Noshimuri directly, are you?” Steve asked, watching Billy so lying would be harder.

“I have no reason to doubt their word,” Billy said.

“But you’re wiling to doubt mine,” Steve said in disappointment. “I have never lied to you. That didn’t change when I took off the uniform.”

“What sort of ‘proof’ did they offer to you?” Danny asked with a liberal use of air quotes.

Billy glanced from Steve to Danny before turning to look out the massive windows that took up one whole wall of his office.

“No proof then,” Danny said. “You only have their say-so. No recordings, no photo surveillance, nothing.” Danny stood, watching Steve do the same. “We’re done here. Get us an appointment with Noshimuri. In the meantime tell your ‘source’ you are not part of their blood lust. Stay away from us. Stay away from Sam. And we’re good.”

“And if I don’t?” Billy asked, standing abruptly.

“Accidents happen,” Danny said casually. “The brakes on Mercedes have been known to be…”


“Are you threatening me?” Billy asked in deadly quiet.

“Friendly advice,” Steve said over his shoulder as he and Danny left Billy’s office.

“Think it helped?” Danny asked when they were in Steve’s truck.

“At least we gave him something to think about,” Steve said. “The brakes on his car?”

Danny shrugged. “It was the first thing I could think of.”
“How do you know he drives a Mercedes?” Steve asked.

“Babe. I used to be a detective. I do my homework.”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed with a smile over at him. “Faulty brakes - not a bad way to get rid of a problem.”

“Please. I do not want to know how you know that.”

“No you don’t,” Steve agreed. “I wonder if Billy’ll make an appointment with Hiro now that we’ve threatened him.”

“If the Governor is friends with Noshimuri, he must have an office to conduct business,” Danny said thoughtfully.

“Which means we could call and make an appointment ourselves,” Steve concluded.

“Exactly. Did Tua call you?” Danny asked, accepting Steve’s phone when he had it out of his pocket. “No Tua. Mary? Is that your sister Mary?”

“Maybe,” Steve said. “She leave a message?”

Danny checked, pressing ‘play voicemail.’ It was a long-winded rambling message with some sniffling at the end. “Call me,” was the last thing she said before hanging up. “She always sound like that?” Danny asked.

“That’s Mary,” Steve confirmed, not adding anything to it.

While Danny had Steve’s phone, he Googled Hiro Noshimuri. He got an address in Tokyo but thought that was a trifle too far to go to talk to him. With a little more digging, he found an address in Honolulu, calling the number Google helpfully supplied.

The phone was answered by someone claiming to work for A&M Imports. The man with a faint Japanese accent politely inquired as to the nature of the call.

“I’m interested in setting up an appointment with Hiro Noshimuri,” Danny said, figuring why not? What did he have to lose?

“Mr. Noshimuri is not in at present. May I ask who is calling?”


“And the nature of your inquiry, Mr. McGarrett?” the man asked, showing no signs of concern that the man with a ‘vendetta’ against his boss was calling.

“I believe we have a mutual friend,” Danny said, hoping that was enough.

“I am unclear as to what that means,” the man responded.

“I understand. If you would ask Mr. Noshimuri if he would be willing to meet with me, I’m pretty sure he’ll know why I’m requesting it,” Danny said.
“Very well,” the reply came. “May I reach you on this number after I speak with Mr. Noshimuri?”

“Yes,” Danny said. “Thank you for your help.”

The line was disconnected and Danny looked over at Steve with a shrug.

“Did he seem worried I was calling?” Steve asked.

“Not in the least. You could have been the White Rabbit as far as he was concerned.”

“Hmm…wonder if he’ll call you…me…us back with a time?”

“We’ll see,” Danny said, taking out his own phone. He had three calls from clients and one from Kono. He played Kono’s voicemail on speaker.

“Hey guys,” she chirped, sounding happy and as light as a feather. “I have a friend who has a friend who has…well, never mind. Anyway, this friend’s friend has a house he wants to sell and it might be perfect. Give me a call and I’ll get you a time to see it. Thanks. Aloha.”

“Can you take that much happy all the time?” Danny asked Steve with a laugh.

“It will be a nice change,” Steve said with a smile. He pulled into a parking lot to wait as Danny called Kono. Maybe they could go right away in which case there was no point in going home first.”

“Hey babe,” Danny said when Kono picked up.

“Danny,” she replied breathlessly. He could hear the sound of the ocean in the background. Probably surfing again.

“You have a lead for us?”

“I do,” she said happily. “The house has five bedrooms and a basement.”

“Do we need a basement?” he asked both Kono and Steve.

“Of course,” Kono said. “For the whips and chains.”

“Whips and chains,” Danny repeated, wondering why he was having this conversation with Kono. If Chin found out…well, he didn’t bring it up.

“Makes sense,” Steve said.

“How has this become my life?” Danny asked them both.

“Dude,” Kono replied like that explained everything.

“When can we see the ‘perfect’ house?” Danny asked.

“Right now?” Kono suggested. “My friend’s friend is there. He said if you have time to come, he’ll show you around.”
“May as well,” Steve said.

“All right,” Danny agreed. Kono provided them the address and said she’d call right now to let him know they were coming.

“Call me when you’re done,” Kono said, extracting their promise that they would.

As Steve drove toward the address, Danny called Sam. He told Sam what had happened during their meeting with Billy, Sam agreeing that Billy was probably being used. Danny also told him that they had requested a meeting with Noshimuri directly but didn’t know if that would work out.

“Keep me posted,” Sam requested as they hung up.

Steve drove to the address of Kono’s friend, glad it was out of town. As they drove up the winding driveway, they agreed it was a good omen. When they reached the top, they parked and got out, admiring the house. The front was two stories high, a glistening chandelier in the bay windows. The house spread out from there, looking well tended and the exact size they needed. As they were admiring the pristine path that led up to the front doors, the doors opened, a tall Hawaiian leaving the house.

“You must be Steve and Danny,” the man said in a warm, inviting voice.

“We are,” Danny agreed, walking up the three steps, his hand extended. “I’m Danny.”

“Steve,” he said, also shaking the man’s hand.

“I’m Holokai,” he said, stepping back into the house and welcoming them in. “It’s good to meet you. I don’t know Kono very well but she says you are good people.”

“She definitely is,” Danny said.

He showed them through the house, Danny becoming more and more excited as they saw what the house had to offer. He was certain Steve was also pleased with the house but was keeping his own council, letting Danny do all the talking.

“Kono said you have a basement?” Danny asked, slightly breathless at how perfect this house was. There was even an office large enough for two desks. It was as if the house had been built with them in mind.

“Yes there is,” Holokai said, going back toward the gleaming kitchen that had a commercial-grade stove and a huge refrigerator already in place. He turned on the basement light, leading them down to it. It had native stone walls and a slate floor. The ceiling even had exposed wooden beams. It was as if it had been designed to house whips and chains.

“Very nice,” Danny said in approval. The basement felt enormous, and was cooled by its position at least partially underground.

Holokai led them back upstairs and into the gently sloping backyard. He didn’t have a pool but there was a space up against the side of the house that would perfect for the installation of one. The door to the sitting room was right there for easy entry into the house. The house sat in the center of three acres, a little less than they would have liked but everything else was close to perfect.
“This is…very, very nice,” Danny said, looking at the ring of huge trees blocking the house from any other structure. Yet they were on a small rise, lending the house the feeling of openness. “How much are you asking?”

Holokai looked at Danny in some surprise before turning his gaze on Steve. “You don’t need to discuss it?”

“If Steve hated it, he would have said,” Danny assured him, smiling up at Steve. “Right babe?”

“Yep,” Steve agreed.

Holokai told them what he was planning to ask, the amount not a surprise to Steve or Danny. If they were surprised at all, it was that the price wasn’t higher. “If we can do this without a realtor, I can come down slightly,” Holokai said, taking their hesitation for disapproval.

“What if we paid half in cash?” Steve asked.

“Oh,” Holokai said, really surprised by that offer. “Then I could come down even more.”

“How much?” Danny asked, watching him consider the question.

Holokai told them, Danny glancing at Steve who nodded.

“We’ll pay you half in cash and finance the rest,” Danny confirmed.

“Just like that? Without an appraisal?” Holokai asked in surprise.

“Are you planning to cheat us?” Steve asked.

“Of course not.”

“We’re required to have it appraised for our lender,” Danny confirmed. “But that’s a technicality.”

“I see,” Holokai said, still surprised by this sudden turn of events. “Know anyone who needs a boat?”

“What sort of boat?” Steve asked. He thought Holokai might be kidding but it was worth asking.

“A small sailing yacht,” Holokai said. “Sleeps six. Has a dining room to accommodate twelve. It was overhauled last year.” He gave them other technical information which sounded like gibberish to Danny but Steve was nodding in approval.

“How much?” Steve asked when he’d finished describing it.

“Seriously?” Holokai said, looking doubtful.

“All you had to say was ‘sailing’,” Danny told him with a laugh. “How much for the boat?”

Holokai told them, Steve nodding. He motioned with his head to the side, Holokai understanding they wanted to discuss it. He went into the house as Steve looked down at Danny.

“Can I have it, Danno?” Steve asked, making Danny laugh.
“Babe. You can have whatever you want.”

“It’s a good investment. According to maritime law, once we’re twenty four nautical miles into international waters, gambling is no longer illegal,” Steve told him, making him laugh again.

“You didn’t think to tell me that earlier?”

Steve shrugged. “I’m telling you now.”

“Yes you are,” Danny agreed.

“Let’s tell him we’ll pay cash for the boat and get a mortgage for the house. It’s worth more than he’s saying, I’d bet money on it.”

“I wonder why he’s in such a rush to sell,” Danny said.

“Maybe he knows about my vendetta against Hiro Noshimuri and is scared not to sell it to us,” Steve suggested.

Danny shook his head at that, pulling on the front of Steve’s shirt to get him started toward the house. “We are willing to pay cash for the boat and get a mortgage for the house.”

“I see,” Holokai said, considering it. “This is better than I had dared hope.”

“We’re motivated to buy. You are clearly motivated to sell,” Danny pointed out.

“There is that,” Holokai agreed.

“Why are you giving up such a beautiful house?” Steve asked, surprising Holokai.

“I built it for my fiancée,” Holokai said sadly. “She decided after it was finished that she didn’t love me or the house enough to live here. She returned to the mainland. We’d met while working at University of Hawaii and I thought we wanted the same things. That turned out not to be the case.”

“What do you do there?” Danny asked.

“I used to be the associate Provost,” Holokai said, not sounding bitter.

“And now you’re unengaged and unemployed?” Steve asked in sympathy.

“I am unengaged,” Holokai agreed. “But when I decided I needed to leave Hawaii behind, I got a new job at Boston University. As Dean of Science.”

“Congratulations,” Danny said. “Are you living in the house currently?”

“I am until fall semester starts. I can be out whenever you need me to be.”

“When are you going to Boston?” Steve asked.

“End of July. But I’m willing to vacate sooner.”
“End of July is fine,” Danny assured him. “We’ll take possession August 1.”

“Are you sure?” Holokai asked, still surprised that they had made a decision so quickly.

“Very sure,” Steve confirmed. “We’ll talk to our lender tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow’s Saturday,” Holokai pointed out.

“He’s a close friend,” Danny replied. “Not just our banker.”

“I see,” Holokai said.

“We’ll arrange an appraisal and have it inspected. Once that’s done, we’ll have the financing put in place,” Danny said.

“We’ll appraise the boat as well, for insurance purposes,” Steve said.

“And you’re willing to buy the boat sight-unseen,” Holokai said, shaking his head.

“We’re going to the dock to look at it on our way home,” Steve corrected. “From what you’ve described, it’s exactly what we need. Do you need to arrange for us to have access to it?”

“I’ll call the harbor-master,” Holokai said. “He has a key, in case of emergency.”

“You could have the boat in Boston,” Steve pointed out.

“I considered it,” Holokai said. “But the cost of getting it there would be prohibitive. And once you’ve sailed the Hawaiian waters, nothing else comes close.”

“Understandably,” Steve said. “When can we take possession of the boat?”

“Once you have it insured and I have the money,” Holokai said. “I’m not planning to use it again while I’m here.”

They thought there might be more to that story than he was saying but it wasn’t their place to ask. After discussing a few other details, exchanging contact information and handshakes, Steve and Danny left. Danny called Kono as promised.

“We bought it,” he told her to her squeals of delight.

“Really? Oh this is so exciting. When can I see it? When are you getting it? When will the club open?”

“Take a breath,” Danny advised with a laugh. “He’s going to stay until the end of July. We’ll take possession August 1. There are a few renovations we’ll need to make. But the basement ceiling has exposed wood beams.”

“Get out,” she said, laughing.

“True facts,” he said. “He also is selling us his boat. According to Sailor Steve, gambling is legal twenty four miles off shore, when you’re in international waters.”
“Oh how perfect,” she gushed. “I never thought of that but it’s just perfect.”

“You ready to manage the club and a gambling yacht?” Danny asked her.

“I’ll have two assistant managers. No problem.”

“All right,” Danny said, happy that she was so pleased. “Can you come to dinner next Friday night? We’re going to invite Jonathan. We’ll also ask Chin and Stan.”

“Sure, brah. I’ll be there.”

“We’re going to have a logo designed. If you have any ideas, get them to us?”

“I have many talents. Art is not one,” Kono told him.

“All right,” Danny laughed. “We’ll see you next Friday if not before. And thanks.”

“You’re welcome,” she said with a laugh before hanging up.

“Did we say she could have two assistant managers?” Danny asked Steve.

“Are you going to tell her no? Because I’m sure not,” Steve informed him.

“Yeah. There is that,” Danny agreed.

Steve laughed as he drove them to the dock where Holokai’s boat was located. They stopped by the harbor-master’s office and were shown the boat by one of his workers. The young woman handed over the key to wait on the dock as they inspected it.

Steve declared it seaworthy and exactly what they needed. Danny could tell he really liked the boat and felt the need to remind him that it would belong to the club.

“I know that,” Steve said, running one hand along the gleaming wood of the deck rails.

“But once you teach me to sail, we could take it out,” Danny said with an indulgent smile.

“Okay,” Steve said with a smile. He leaned down to kiss Danny, laughing at Danny’s expression. “You are very good to me.”

“And why is that?” Danny asked in delight.

“Because I let you take naked pictures of me,” Steve said, Danny laughing in response.

“Sure. That’s the only reason.”

“And because your eyes roll in the back of your head when I suck you off,” Steve whispered, admiring the color painting Danny’s cheeks as he said it.

“Shut up,” Danny said, leaving the boat and Steve’s laughter behind.
Steve receives a visit from someone he never expected and agrees to provide the favor requested of him.

You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give. ~Khalil Gibran

Steve got home from his final appointment the next evening, surprised to find a sleek black Jaguar in the driveway. Danny was still with his client and was not due home for another hour. Steve cautiously left his truck, unlocking the front door. The house was undisturbed. As he was standing in the living room, trying to decide what to do next, he noticed a man standing near the beach at the end of the yard.

Steve left through the sunroom door, standing in the grass to study his unexpected guest. It was Hiro Noshimuri. Steve had no idea what to think of this turn of events. That Hiro was alone was even more of a surprise.

“Aloha,” Steve called, Hiro turning to look up at him. He gave a friendly wave before crossing the grass toward the house.

“I know this is a surprise,” Hiro said, looking up at Steve.

“That’s an understatement,” Steve said. “Would you care for a drink?” Seemed the polite thing to say.

“If it’s no trouble,” the older man said, following Steve into the house. Steve poured two glasses of bourbon, handing one to his visitor. “I owe you an apology.”

“An apology?” Steve echoed, inviting Hiro to have a seat at the table.

“I have added considerable difficulty to your life these past few weeks.”

“On purpose?” Steve asked, enjoying Hiro’s laughter.

“Yes, on purpose,” Hiro said, sipping from his drink. “I have found myself in the unenviable position of acquiring several deadly enemies.”

“Never an easy thing to live with,” Steve said. “You know I’m not one of them, don’t you?”

“I do. I’m the one who has provided unreliable information to Mr. Harrington through reliable channels. I regret making your friend doubt you.”

“Why spread those rumors about me?” Steve asked, not particularly worried about anyone’s opinion
about him, with the exception of Danny.

“I need to die,” Hiro said. “Not literally. But my enemies must believe I have. As you dispatched
Makaha, I knew you were capable of ending my life as well. I fear you will be an even greater target
when I disappear.”

“I’m not particularly worried. There’s a certain… expediency to being thought of as someone not to
be crossed.”

“Indeed,” Hiro agreed. “I will be leaving Hawaii, permanently, within the next week. I plan to make
it look as though you are at fault.”

“That I killed you,” Steve clarified.

“Yes,” Hiro said in some regret. “Before I ‘die’ I will transfer two million dollars into your account.
Untraceable. No doubt it will be believed to be blood money paid for my murder.”

“That’s extremely generous of you,” Steve said.

“It will help with the start-up of your club,” Hiro said, seeing the surprise on Steve’s face. “Yes, I
know of your plans. It is an excellent idea. I have a few recommendations for employees and
suppliers I will send you. Whether or not you accept my referrals is entirely your decision.”

“Can you transfer half of it into Danny’s account? Keep them guessing.”

“Certainly. You will no doubt wish to be honest with Mr. Williams concerning my untimely death.
But I must request your indulgence in not telling anyone else the truth.”

“It will make things harder but I understand,” Steve said. “How exactly am I going to kill you?”

“Publically would be best but far too messy.”

“Abduction prior to killing seems a safe way to go,” Steve suggested.

“Yes,” Hiro agreed. “That makes a certain sort of sense.”

“When do you need to die?”

“I have a few details I must wrap up. Do you have time Wednesday?” Hiro asked as though they
were discussing plans for tea.

Steve took out his phone, checking his calendar. “I’m free from 10 a.m. until 4:30.”

“All right,” Hiro said with a nod. “I have a meeting at the bank Wednesday at 11:30. If you can
come at 12:30, you can take me at gun point.”

“Then what?” Steve asked politely.

“You’ll take me to a private air strip. I’m arranging transport off the island. The less you know about
that, the better,” Hiro assured him.

“Did you arrange my father’s murder?” Steve asked.
Hiro sipped his bourbon before meeting Steve’s eyes. “I did not. I know you suspect me. I would suspect me if I were you. I am blameless in it.”

Steve believed him. What point would there be in lying? He would never see Hiro again after he ‘killed’ him. “Does your family know the truth about your imminent death?”

“Sadly, no,” Hiro said. “Letting them believe I am dead is incredibly difficult yet better for their safety.”

“I’m pretty sure they’d trade less safety for the truth,” Steve said.

“It would make you less of a target as well,” Hiro had to acknowledge.

“Perhaps when you are safely away, you can inform them.”

Hiro considered that but didn’t say anything. He stiffened when a key turned in the front door.

“It’s Danny,” Steve assured him. “Hey babe. We’re in here.”

“We?” Danny said, coming into the sunroom and stopping when he saw the identity of Steve’s visitor. “Well.”

“Hello, Danny,” Hiro said.

“This is a surprise,” Danny said, accepting a glass when Steve had it poured for him.

“We were in the midst of discussing Steve’s plan to dispatch me,” Hiro said, smiling at Danny’s frown. He and Steve explained, Danny considering all they had said.

“It will make your life easier,” Danny had to admit, even though all of the color had drained from his face.

“Make sure you are with a client at 12:30 Wednesday. Or better still, go and see Sam. You can hand deliver the incorporation papers,” Steve said.

“Excellent idea,” Hiro agreed. “Be seen on tape. Have the Lieutenant Governor vouch for you.”

“Or I can meet again with Billy. I think there’s a certain poetic justice to being with him when it happens,” Danny said, not sure if it was appropriate to laugh. He thought he might be about to be sick at the idea of what they were planning. Sick or hysterical – he wasn’t sure which.

“Go see Sam. Then go out to lunch with him,” Steve advised.

“Where is this happening?” Danny asked.

“The Bank of Hawaii on South King Street,” Hiro said.

“We’ll have lunch as far away from there as possible,” Danny said. “I’ll ask him to meet me at a restaurant on the other side…of the world.”

“That’s a good idea,” Steve agreed. “I’ll take your car. Harder to track than mine.”
“And you can stash me in the trunk,” Hiro said.

“Yes,” Steve confirmed. “I’ll put in extra blankets.”

“Thank you,” Hiro agreed.

“Is there anything else I need to know?” Steve asked as Hiro stood.

“You will have my gratitude, always. I know that I am asking a great deal of you,” Hiro said sounding sincerely regretful.

“I understand your reasoning,” Steve assured him. “I’ll try to make your death as quick and painless as I can.”

“I appreciate it,” Hiro said, extending his hand. Steve shook it, Danny doing the same. “Thank you both.”

He left the house, Steve looking at Danny with the same expression Danny wore – discombobulated.

“Oh. My. Fucking God,” Danny said, dramatically dropping into the chair.

“I know,” Steve agreed, pouring him more bourbon. “Imagine my surprise when I found him standing on the beach.”


Steve smiled and shook his head at that. “I think he knows I can handle myself. You might want to consider moving out for a while.”

“Not a chance, buddy-boy. Somebody has to watch your back.”

“I was hoping you’d say that,” Steve said, leaning closer to kiss him. “The two million dollars will help ease some of the more troublesome aspects of being thought a murderer.”

“One of those millions is mine,” Danny reminded him. “I’m going to use it to…well, I don’t know. Buy a Ferrari maybe. A bright red one so it’s even more obvious, if that’s possible.”

“If you want a Ferrari, I’ll buy you one,” Steve promised.

“You can’t afford one any longer. We bought you a boat, remember.”

Steve shrugged at his words. “We’ll buy you a Ferrari as soon as the money is in our accounts.”

“No,” Danny sighed. “We’ll use it for the club. Even if it blood money.”

“Bloodless money,” Steve corrected. “Do you want me to take you out to dinner?”

“No,” Danny decided. “Did you talk to Stan today?”

“I did. He said it won’t be any problem. He’ll arrange an appraisal on Monday. I called Holokai and he said Monday was fine. The boat appraiser will call the harbor-master on Tuesday.”
“Good,” Danny said. “How was your day? Before you entered murder-for-hire?”

Steve told him about the clients he’d seen, including Jonathan. Jonathan was so excited about the club, they ended up talking the whole time. They both agreed not to see one another again in their current relationship. They would only meet officially to discuss the club.

“You?” Steve asked, watching Danny like he’d found everything he ever wanted wrapped up in a small, blond-headed package.

“It was a fine day,” Danny said waving it off. “I’m glad we’re opening the club. I don’t want to pretend to care about some of these people any longer.”

“I know what you mean,” Steve said. “We aren’t therapists.”

“They think we are,” Danny said. “We need a therapist on call for the club.”

“We do,” Steve agreed. “Do you know any massage therapists?”

“Ones who also have sex with their clients?”

“Doesn’t matter. Vanilla therapists or hooker therapists. As long as they are licensed to give massages.”

“I don’t,” Danny realized. “Kono probably does.”

“Probably. She’s bringing her cousin Kamekona with her Friday. He’s apparently in charge of security.”

“Huh,” Danny said. “We’ve given her authority to hire personnel?”

“Again, you want to be the one to tell her no?”

“Absolutely not,” Danny said. “We need a bondage…person.”

“We may need two,” Steve said, considering it.

“One male, one female,” Danny agreed. “Will they be there full time? Or only when someone wants an appointment?”

“I have no idea. We need to talk to someone who does it professionally.”

“We do,” Danny agreed, putting down his glass. “I know it’s not full dark yet. But let’s go to bed.”

“Sounds good,” Steve agreed, standing up and taking Danny’s hand to pull him upstairs.
Chapter Summary

Steve makes plans to kidnap Hiro. In the meantime, he fills his time with other important business.

*I've got a Ferrari 430….I don't know what it cost but it wasn't cheap. I bought it because I was being a boy. It's fast and looks good. ~Jermain Defoe*

Between getting everything in place to buy the house and meeting with their clients, Steve and Danny’s week was a complete whirlwind. Danny had arranged with Sam to have lunch at noon on Wednesday at a very public restaurant as far from the Bank of Hawaii as he could manage. He felt a little badly about using Sam but since he wasn’t supposed to know about Steve’s plans to ‘kill’ Hiro, he hoped Sam would think it was a coincidence.

Steve debated with himself, and with Danny, about the wisdom of using an unloaded gun to kidnap Hiro. They finally decided he should leave it loaded, just in case. He could only hope that he wasn’t fired on while he was busy stashing Hiro in Danny’s trunk.

When Danny got home very late Tuesday night, they cleaned out the trunk of his Camaro, removing the detritus that collected no matter how hard Danny tried to prevent it.

“One?” Steve asked, looking at the single rain boot in his hand.

Danny shrugged, taking it to throw it into the trash can.

“Where’s the other one?” Steve asked, helping to collect the other random items.

“No idea,” Danny said. “Did you get the appraisal for the house?”

“It takes several days,” Steve reminded him. “We’ll have it by Friday for sure.”

“Okay,” Danny said with a yawn. “Who knew kidnapping was so much work?”

“Not me,” Steve said, putting the two plush blankets in the trunk before closing the lid. “Let’s go to bed.”

“Please,” Danny agreed, going with Steve into the house.

“You need to take a shower,” Steve requested as they went upstairs.

“I’m sorry. I showered there. I should carry my own soap.”

“Did you make contact after you showered?” Steve asked, following him into the bathroom.
“No,” Danny said. “It’s the soap. We should get some. It smells like a whorehouse.”

“Yes it does,” Steve said, sitting on the closed toilet lid as Danny stripped. “Are you going shopping for the club on Friday?”

“Isn’t that a little early, babe?” Danny asked, getting into the steaming water.

“Is it?” Steve asked, opening the shower door to join him.

“You are such a goof,” Danny said affectionately, waiting as Steve scrubbed him with the odorless soap they had agreed to use. As many showers as they ended up taking, they also needed something that was as gentle to their skin as possible. Danny studied Steve as Steve studied Danny’s hard, compact body. “Are you nervous about tomorrow?” he asked, kissing Steve’s wet head.

“No consciously,” Steve said, considering it. “I guess I’m afraid of Hiro getting hurt.”

“That would be funny if it weren’t so…ironic,” Danny said.

“Exactly,” Steve agreed. “I really wish he’d tell his family. For their sake.”

“He may still. Once he’s safely away. Do you think Sam will ever forgive me when he finds out I used him as an alibi?”

“Eventually,” Steve said. “We’ll give him a free membership.”

Danny laughed. “He won’t ever be able to use it.”

“Maybe not,” Steve said. “He could cruise on the boat.”

“There is that,” Danny agreed. “Are we supplying hookers on board?”

“I have no idea,” Steve said. “Right now I’m too tired to think about it.”

“Yeah,” Danny said, reaching behind him to turn off the shower. “Come on, SEAL boy. Let’s go to bed. You have a murder to carry out tomorrow.”

They tumbled into bed when they were dry, asleep almost from the minute their heads landed on their pillows.

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It was much too early the next morning when Steve’s alarm went off. He quickly silenced it, kissing Danny back to sleep. “You don’t need to get up yet,” he said softly.

“Mmm…love you,” Danny murmured into his pillow.

“I know you do,” Steve said, kissing him one last time.

After getting his gun out of the safe to lock it in the trunk, he drove the Camaro to his first appointment. He knew he didn’t give his client as much focused attention as he was accustom to but if Bobby noticed, he didn’t say anything. He still paid Steve the same as always, confirming their appointment for the next Wednesday.
“Absolutely,” Steve assured him, accepting a cup of coffee before leaving Bobby’s house. It was only 10 a.m. and he didn’t really want to go back home. But he hadn’t thought about what he should do until it was time to ‘meet’ Hiro. He was usually much more organized. Something about the prospects of kidnap and murder scrambled his brain.

He decided that having pancakes at the closest diner would help fill some of the time. He had his iPad with him so he could also look for professional male and female…masters? He supposed that was what he needed.

He ordered a large stack and coffee before thumbing through his Google search. He found a couple of possibilities, both of them saying “Appointments available.” He wondered if that included appointments to simply talk to them. One sure way to find out was to call. The first number he tried went to voicemail, the second answered almost immediately by a woman with a sultry voice.

“In what way may I assist you?” she asked.

Steve thought that was an interesting way to answer the phone and it gave him pause. “Hi,” he said as his brain raced to catch up.

“Hello,” she said, a laugh barely disguised. “This is your first time, isn’t it, dear?”

“Yes. No.” Steve stopped, taking a breath. “I’d like to make an appointment, but only to talk.”

“Of course, dear. I hoped you would call me.”

“You know who I am?” Steve had to ask.

“You’re using your regular phone, dear. Did you think you were on your untraceable phone?” she asked.

“Oh,” Steve said. “And you know who I am?”

“Certainly I do,” she confirmed. “My name is Michelle to my friends.”

“My name’s Steve. But I guess you know that.”

“I do,” she agreed. “When would you like to stop by?”

“Mmm…tomorrow?” Steve suggested.

“When are you free?”

“At 11:00,” Steve said.

“Is that delicious Daniel coming with you?” she asked, nearly purring.

Steve laughed at her question. “I don’t know if he’s free or not. If he is, I’ll make sure he’s with me.”

“Excellent. Come to my house. We’ll have tea.”

“All right,” Steve agreed, recording her address in his iPad. “I’ll see you tomorrow at 11:00.”
“Don’t be late,” she said, laughing before hanging up.

He sent Danny a text, telling him about the appointment. Danny replied immediately that he was free and he would like to go, especially since Michelle thought he was ‘delicious.’

You are, Steve assured him.

I know YOU think I am. Most ppl only think me as dessert.

What r u doing?

Driving dwtwn U?

Steve took a picture of his pancakes, sending it to Danny.

Carb loading I c

Sure Steve responded. Don’t text and drive

Stop texting me!

Steve laughed to himself, eating more of his pancakes. They were some of the best he’d ever had, light, fluffy, delicious. And the coffee was hot and plentiful, the two most important characteristics.

When he’d eaten all of the pancakes and refused the waitress’s offer for more, he left the diner. He still had some time to fill when he spotted the exotic car dealership down the block. No harm in looking.

He entered the dealership, all of the cars safely stored inside the enormous building. He was surrounded by Ferraris and Porches and tucked away in one corner was a Bentley. He couldn’t imagine how much that would cost.

A salesman approached, eyeing him before deciding he was worthy. Steve had worn pressed trousers and a white button-down, not wanting to look like a murderer for hire. Apparently his choice of attire met with the salesman’s approval.

“Looking for something special?” the salesman asked, extending his hand. “Name’s Joel Worthman.”

“Steve,” he returned, looking at the cherry red Ferrari not ten feet from where he was standing. “I was thinking of getting one of these beauties for my boyfriend.”

“That’s an extravagant gift,” Joel observed.

“He’s well worth it,” Steve said, moving closer to the car. “How much would you knock off the price if I paid cash?”

“Is the money counterfeit?” Joel joked.

“Maybe,” Steve said. “You can have it checked before delivery.”
“I don’t know that we can actually accept that much cash,” Joel said, looking over his shoulder for a manager.

“I’ll put it on my American Express card if that would make it simpler,” Steve offered.

“Are you for real?” Joel had to ask, staring at Steve.

“I believe I am,” Steve said, reaching into his pocket for his wallet. He pulled out his black American Express, handing it to Joel. “You’ll see I have enough credit.”

“I…umm…okay,” Joel said. “No test drive? No discussion?”

“He wants a red one. This one is red. But I have an appointment at 12:30. Can we be done by then?” Steve asked.

Joel looked at his watch, nodding. “Yeah. Right. I need to get my manager.”

“I’m sure that you do,” Steve agreed, watching Joel scurry away. It was less than a minute before Joel returned accompanied by an older gentleman wearing a suit with no tie.

“Mr. McGarrett,” the older man said, extending his hand. “I am Leonard Shelby. I understand you are interested in this Ferrari.”

“I am,” Steve agreed.

“Excellent.”

“Is this one available?” Steve asked, wondering why they were making a production of this. They were a car dealership. They sold cars every day.

“It is,” Mr. Shelby said. “And you wish to put the purchase on your American Express card?”

“Yes,” Steve said, wishing they would get on with it. He had a Yakuza boss to kill. They were threatening to interfere with that.

“Very good. If you’ll step with me into my office, we’ll get the paperwork filled out.”

“As I told Mr. Worthman, I have an appointment at 12:30. Can we be done by then?”

“Certainly,” Mr. Shelby said, leading Steve into his plush office. “Have a seat.”

Steve sat in one of the comfortable armchairs facing Mr. Shelby’s enormous desk. “I inquired about a discount for paying up front. What sort of deal are you willing to make?”

Mr. Shelby told him what the discount would be, Steve considering it. It was about 10%, more or less. “Make it 15%,” Steve said.

Mr. Shelby studied him before nodding. “Very well,” he confirmed.

“Once I’ve signed and paid for it, I’ll need to have it driven to my house,” Steve said.

“Certainly. We can take care of that for you,” Mr. Shelby agreed. He clicked his computer mouse
several times, the printer behind him spitting out sheets of paper with tiny print on them. He gave them to Steve, explaining each one as Steve signed it. When he was beginning to get writer’s cramp, Mr. Shelby nodded. “She is yours.”

“Excellent,” Steve said. “Can you put one of those gigantic bows on it like they do in the commercials?”

“I believe we can arrange that,” Mr. Shelby said, returning Steve’s credit card. “It was a pleasure doing business with you.”

“You too,” Steve said, leaving the dealership with one last glance at his gift. He had to call his insurance agent to have it added on to their policy. A quick check of his watch showed that the call would have to wait until he’d taken care of his business with Hiro.
Danny and Steve “discuss” the new Ferrari and leaving prostitution to other people.

“No other man-made device since the shields and lances of the knights quite fulfills a man’s ego like
an automobile. ~William Rootes

“Are you out of your fucking mind?” Danny demanded when Steve walked into the house.

“Probably,” Steve replied, smiling at Danny. “Do you like it?”

“That’s not the point. We have a club to furnish. A boat to rearrange….something. And you buy me
a Ferrari.”

“Yep,” Steve confirmed, pulling an unwilling Danny into his arms. “Not like we can’t afford it,” he
said, kissing the protests out of Danny’s mouth.

“That’s not even remotely the point,” Danny said, trying for outraged.

“What is the point, Danno?” Steve asked, kissing him before he could answer.

“I said we weren’t buying one. And you did it anyway.”

“We didn’t buy one. I did. I bought it for you.”

“I know that. The giant bow was my first hint. The second was that the title is in my name,” Danny
said. “You have lost all sense.”

“Since I met you,” Steve agreed.

Danny sighed, knowing it was hopeless. Steve had yet to say those three magic words but Danny
figured at this point they were redundant. “How did it go killing Hiro?”

“Smooth as glass,” Steve said. “I pulled my gun on him as he was leaving the bank. I stashed him in
the trunk, left town, let him out, he drove to the airstrip after blindfolding me. I could probably find it
again but I have no plans to try.”

“Are you going to be arrested?”

“Possibly,” Steve said. “But they won’t find a body. That will make arresting me harder. And he’s a
known criminal. They aren’t too worried about his disappearance.”

“Did Chin call you?” Danny asked.
“No. I figured I’d call him tonight,” Steve said. “You want to drive your new car out to dinner?”

“No. I want to drag you upstairs and prove how grateful I am,” Danny said, sounding angry.

“Mmm…I like the sounds of that,” Steve said. “Let’s get naked and I’ll call Chin.”

“Absolutely not. Call Chin then we’ll get naked,” Danny corrected, pulling him upstairs.

“Okay,” Steve said with a laugh, following him into their bedroom. “Hey,” he said when Chin answered.

“Don’t ever call me again,” Chin warned.

“You heard, huh?”

“You killed Hiro Noshimuri. The entire island heard,” Chin said.

“Technically, I kidnapped him,” Steve said.

“You didn’t kill him?” Chin asked, sounding calmer.

“I didn’t say that,” Steve said, watching Danny strip, taking his time doing it. “Are you planning to arrest me?”

“That’s a matter of some debate,” Chin admitted. “As he’s a known criminal, you’ve done us a favor. But we can’t seem to be allowing kidnapping and murder go unpunished.”

“What if I promise to never do it again?” Steve asked.

“Stop. This is serious. Even if you aren’t arrested, you have a giant target painted on your back. And your front,” Chin said.

“Bigger than when I killed Makaha?” Steve asked.

“Possibly. Hiro was also an established businessman. He had a lot of friends on this island.”

“And enemies,” Steve pointed out. “I’m free tomorrow after 4:00 if you need to arrest me. I should be home by then.”

“Steve,” Chin sighed.

“Seriously. I’ll be bailed out in no time. There’s no body. There’s no proof I harmed him. I’m not the first to demand he go somewhere at gunpoint.”

“That’s all true,” Chin agreed. “Please try to stay out of any more trouble. I’ll talk to the chief tomorrow. Maybe we’ll ignore it this time.”

“Thank you,” Steve said, licking his lips when Danny began to caress himself.

“Say goodbye Steve,” Chin said in a rare show of exasperation.

“Good night Chin,” Steve said, disconnecting.
“Are you going to be arrested?” Danny asked, advancing on him.

“Maybe. Will you be my prison bitch if I am?”

“I’m already your bitch, bitch,” Danny said, crawling into his lap. 

“I’m the one that bought you a car,” Steve reminded him, biting his collarbone.

“What does that have anything to do with anything?” Danny said, unbuttoning Steve’s shirt.

“I have no idea,” Steve admitted. “Except you’re supposed to be proving how grateful you are.”

“What do you think I’m doing?”

“Taking way too long,” Steve protested, looking down at his shirt that still had too many buttons in place. “Have you talked to Sam?”

“Since you murdered Hiro?”

“Yeah,” Steve agreed.

“He called me when the news broke. He yelled at me. When he calmed down, he asked if Hiro was really dead.”

“What’d you say?” Steve asked, his voice hitching when Danny got his fly open. Finally.

“As far as I knew. I don’t like lying to him.”

“I know. I don’t either. But it’s best for Hiro,” Steve said.

“Not so much for you,” Danny replied, looking worried. “Chin’s right. You do have a target on your back.”

“How would you know? You haven’t gotten my shirt off yet.”

“ Aren’t you at all worried?” Danny asked seriously.

“Can we get on with the gratitude, please? Then we’ll deal with the perseveration."

Danny sighed but removed Steve’s clothes so they were both gloriously naked. Steve lay flat on the bed, staring down at Danny as he kissed every part of him he could reach, Steve’s hand in Danny’s hair. He wasn’t directing, only holding on so he didn’t fly apart from all the sensations Danny was stirring up.

“Oh fuck, babe,” Steve moaned when Danny concentrated all of his attention on Steve’s cock. It was hard and ready, taking a firm interest in everything Danny was doing which was mostly making Steve crazy with need. “Come on, come on,” Steve breathed, hitching his hips up. Danny put his arm across Steve’s flat belly, keeping him in place as he licked up the side of his cock. “I’m not shaved ice. Hurry the hell up.”

“So impatient,” Danny tutted, taking the tip into his hot, sinful mouth. He licked and nibbled and
drove Steve even more crazy.

“Goin’ come,” Steve warned when Danny hollowed out his cheeks, sucking for all he was worth. What he was worth was Steve melting down, coating Danny’s mouth and throat. Steve moaned as he flew apart, his body over-stimulated through Danny’s efforts. “God damn.”

“You’re welcome,” Danny said, kissing his way up Steve’s heaving chest. He stopped to lick both his nipples before capturing his panting mouth with his own.

“What about you?” Steve asked when he had enough breath to speak.

“I’m going to do it. Make you watch and not touch,” Danny said, laying beside him. “Hands over your head.”

Steve did it after scrunching up a pillow so he had an unobstructed view of Danny’s hands circling his own hard cock. Danny’s tongue peeked out of the corner of his mouth, his lids half over his eyes.

“Oh babe. This feels so good. And look at your face. You are in a bad, bad way. I know you want to touch me. But you don’t deserve it. Not after what you did. We can’t be buying Ferraris when we have a club to open. I should tell Michelle tomorrow that she can demonstrate her technique on you. That’s what you deserve, you naughty, naughty boy.”

“Uhnn…” Steve groaned, his hips doing their own dance. He wasn’t going to get hard again but man oh man. That didn’t stop the lust from coursing through every blood cell in his body. “Come on, please.”

Danny shook his head, the pad of his thumb rubbing circles around the head of his cock. “Not yet. You don’t deserve it. Do you promise not to buy any more outlandish gifts?”

“Yes, yes,” Steve panted.

“Do you promise not to kill any more mob bosses?”

“Absolutely,” Steve swore.

“Do you promise to let me actually drive my new Ferrari?”

“Uhnn…” Steve groaned, licking his lips. He groaned even louder when Danny lifted his hands away from his body.

“Well?” Danny asked, rubbing Steve’s stomach so his pre-come transferred to Steve’s hard belly. “Do you promise?”


“When I say,” Danny said, taking back hold of his cock. Certain he had Steve’s undivided attention, he got himself off, turning on his side so all of it landed on Steve’s stomach and hip. “You only get to drive sometimes,” Danny said, laying his head on Steve’s chest.

“Days that end in Y,” Steve said.

“Shut up,” Danny said.
“We need to quit being hookers,” Steve suggested when he thought Danny had recovered enough to be able to concentrate.

“Yeah,” Danny agreed. “Thanks to your vendetta, we don’t need the money.”

“That was my thought,” Steve said. “We’ll tell them about the Club, promise them a membership…”

“…at a discount,” Danny reminded him.

“Right. And not see them professionally any longer.”

“How long will it take for us to extract ourselves?” Danny asked, trying to figure it out.

“Well, it’s not like we have a contract with any of them. We’re friends for hire. We could theoretically not see any of them ever again.”

“Until they join the club,” Danny said. “But if we piss them off, will they still join?”

“The ones who get that pissed shouldn’t join anyway. They’d be bad company.”

“Hmm…” Danny said, considering it. “How do you break up with someone who pays you for sex?”

“Call them and tell them?” Steve suggested.

“I guess we could,” Danny said. “How many appointments do you have tomorrow?”

“One…well, two, sort of. Plus Michelle. You?”

“One. With Phyllis. I’ll tell her in person. I may still have to see her for a few weeks. I’m one of the good things left in her life.”

“All right. I’ve already ‘broken up’ with Jonathan. Does Phyllis have a skill we can use for the Club?” Steve asked.

“She’s a computer programmer,” Danny said. “Won’t we need one on staff?”

“Probably. I’ll bet she can learn to make websites. Can she do networking?”

“I don’t know. I’ll ask tomorrow. If not, we can find something for her, right?”

“She can be the receptionist if she wants,” Steve said.

“If we keep hiring our clients we won’t have any members,” Danny said, making Steve laugh.

“I’ve hired Jonathan. That’s it,” Steve said.

“Yeah,” Danny agreed. “Who are you seeing tomorrow?”

“Erick and Bethany,” Steve said.

“Bethany? Who’s that?”
“She’s new. I’m going to be with Erick and Bethany at the same time,” Steve said.

“Oh. That explains your inability to tell me how many appointments you have,” Danny laughed.

“Yeah. I’m going to call and tell them it’s off. They can go at it like rabbits without me.”

“You usually don’t mind,” Danny said in sympathy, running his fingers through Steve’s hair. “Are you okay?”

“I think so?” Steve hedged. “But now that I see the light at the end of the prostitute tunnel, I’m ready to be out of the game. I don’t regret my choice. I am ready to make a different one.”

“I will be kind of nice to be something other than a penis or an orifice,” Danny had to agree.

“Exactly,” Steve said. “Let’s break up over the phone. Except with Phyllis.”

“Don’t call me. I’m right here,” Danny teased, scooting closer to kiss him.

“Would I have bought you a Ferrari if I was planning to break up with you?” Steve asked.

“Maybe. Help assuage your guilt.”

“Assuage,” Steve repeated, tasting the word.

“Shut up. What time is it?”

“Mmm…8:13,” Steve said, squinting at his watch.

“Then we could start breaking up tonight,” Danny said, sitting up. “Come on, SEAL boy. Let’s go break some hearts.”

“Sounds good,” Steve agreed. “Should we dress before we do it?”

“I suppose,” Danny said, throwing him a pair of shorts and a tee shirt. “Go jump in the shower. I’ll make some coffee.”

“Copy that,” Steve agreed, going into the bathroom for a superfast shower.

“By the way,” Danny said as Steve entered the kitchen. “I found a builder to put in the horizon pool.”

“There’s a surprise,” Steve said, accepting the coffee with just the right amount of cream.

“He’ll start on August 1. When do you think we can open? That would be good info to give our soon-to-be-ex clients.”

“I have no idea,” Steve admitted. “Call Kono and see what she thinks.”

“And you can’t call her why?”

“Because I’m about to break up with Erick and by extension Bethany,” Steve informed him.
“Fine,” Danny said, trying to sound put-upon. “Hey babe.”

“Aloha,” Kono replied, chipper as always. “Howzit?”

“Good. We’re about to break up with our clients. We want to tell them about the club but don’t know when we can realistically expect it to open.”

“Hold on,” she said. “I need to get my spreadsheet.”

“She’s getting her spreadsheet,” Danny relayed to Steve who could only laugh.

“Let’s see,” Kono said. Danny could hear papers ruffling in the background. “Did Steve really kill Hiro?”

“Is that on your spreadsheet?”

“Maybe,” Kono said. “Okay. You take possession August 1. We have some renovations to do. Nothing structural, right?”

“Right. Although I’ve hired the contractor to put in the pool,” Danny said.

“Good. It generally takes 60 to 90 days to finish a pool,” Kono said. “That puts us, best case scenario, November 1.”

“November 1?” Danny said to Steve who shrugged.

“That’s pretty fast,” Kono said. “But you have financing, right?”

“We do,” Danny agreed. “We can start hiring right away.”

“What if we open the Club November 1 as a shakedown cruise? Have potential members come for free for… I don’t know… two weeks? They don’t pay so if the brand new wait staff drops food on them, it’s not that big a deal.”

“That’s a good idea,” Danny said, telling Steve who nodded. “We’re going to be closed Thanksgiving. We could have the shakedown November 1 to Thanksgiving. Stay closed that weekend. Open for real the Monday afterwards.”

“Good,” Kono agreed. “Gives us three days to work out the final kinks. Since they’ll be there free, they’ll be less demanding, hopefully.”

“Hopefully,” Danny said. “Good. We’ll tell our clients.”

“Did Steve kill him for reals?” Kono asked.

“There’s not a body,” Danny said, making her laugh.

“When do I get to drive the Ferrari?”

“How do you know about my Ferrari?” Danny asked.
“Brah,” Kono said.

“Can you drive stick?” Danny asked.

“Of course. Break it in then I’m taking her for a spin,” she declared.

“Yes ma’am,” Danny agreed, laughing with her as they hung up. “Are we selling my Camaro?”

“We’re going to use it as a courtesy car for the Club,” Steve said.

“Oh. Well. That makes sense. We need a van to take members to the boat.”

“We can buy one later,” Steve said. “Tomorrow we need to look at china.”

“Already?” Danny asked, trying not to whine. “Can’t you take Kono?”

“I could. But she’s not my Danno,” Steve said, kissing him in proof.

“Stop,” Danny said, trying to swat at him. “Did you call Erick?”

“Yep. He’s disappointed but excited about the club. He said he’ll join as soon as we are accepting memberships.”

“Good,” Danny said. “Are you cancelling with George on Friday?”

“Nope. I’m going sailing with him,” Steve said. “I won’t see him professionally after that.”

“You need to teach me to sail,” Danny reminded him.

“Why would I need to teach the captain of Rutgers’ regatta team how to sail?” Steve asked, making Danny frown at him.

“Why do I put up with you?” Danny asked in exasperation.

“You keep me around for my body,” Steve said, pulling up his tee shirt to expose his stomach to Danny.

“It’s not that nice,” Danny tried.

Steve dropped his shorts, smirking at Danny.

“All right. All right. It is that nice,” Danny amended. “You are such an exhibitionist.”

“Only for you,” Steve said, kissing his head when his shorts were back in place.

“I seriously doubt that,” Danny scolded, trying for stern.

“What else is on Kono’s spreadsheet that we need to deal with?” Steve asked, sitting pressed up next to Danny on the couch.

“I have no idea. It’s her spreadsheet. We’ll need furniture although Holokai said he would leave some of his.”
“I’d rather start over,” Steve said. “Make it ours.”

“That’s fine. We can tell him when we sign the contracts.”

“What else?” Steve asked. “Did you talk to Grant about a logo?”

“Not yet. He’s out of town. Do you have the blueprints to show George?”

“We’re picking them up tomorrow,” Steve said. “The architect’s office is not far from Michelle’s house.”

“That’s convenient,” Danny said.

“Yep. You gave the incorporation papers to Sam, right?”

“While you were dispatching Hiro. He said they were all in order. He’ll file them with the State tomorrow. We should have our LLC in a couple of weeks.”

“Good. We can open a bank account once we have it. Transfer some of my bloodless money into it,” Steve decided.

“Why did Hiro put a million in my account?” Danny asked.

“To confuse anyone monitoring our accounts. Makes it easier to deny it had to do with Hiro.”

“Except it showed up the same day,” Danny pointed out.

“It’s untraceable. I didn’t give him our account numbers but there it was.”

“If law enforcement had one tenth of the resources of the Yakuza, we could put them out of business,” Danny said.

“I don’t even know if that makes sense,” Steve said.

Danny shrugged, taking Steve’s coffee to sip it. “China? Really?”

“We need to decide and put in the order. It’s not like we can buy enough off the shelves.”

“Take Kono.”

“Can I take Kono in your Ferrari?” Steve asked.

“Yes, if it gets me out of looking at plates.”

“I had no idea one of your secret vendettas was against dishware,” Steve said.

“Well, now you do,” Danny said. “I’m hungry.”

“Yeah?” Steve said, looking up at him as he stood.

“You want something?”
“No, I don’t think so. I’m going up to bed. Come when you’re ready?”

“Don’t get on your computer,” Danny requested. “The last time you did, you decided we needed to open the Club. This time you’ll decide we need to invade a small country.”

“Can’t have an invasion force with civilians,” Steve told him, listening to his laughter as he went upstairs.
Scones and a Missing Camaro

Chapter Summary

Danny and Steve visits the Madame who declines their offer to make use of the basement of Club Four-Four-Five. She does provide a list of possibilities over tea and scones.

*There is no trouble so great or grave that cannot be much diminished by a nice cup of tea.*
~Bernard-Paul Heroux

Steve arrived at Michelle’s mansion a few minutes before 11:00. He parked his truck on the brick driveway right behind Danny’s Ferrari. It shone like a beacon, making Steve smile to see it.

Michelle’s house was huge and imposing. It was an old-fashioned brick mansion looking as though it had been transplanted from the 1800s mainland. There was even a widow’s walk on the roof that no doubt provided a breath-taking view of the ocean to the rear of the house. The house wasn’t on the ocean but it was close enough to remind all comers that they were in Hawaii.

Steve mounted the brick stairway to stand under the portico held up by four marble columns. The door opened before he reached the landing. The woman framed in the door was no doubt Michelle, a stunning woman with porcelain skin and black hair swept up into a complex hairdo. The blue sleeveless dress she wore was clearly made for her, the way it adhered to the lines and curves of her body speaking of its custom design.

“Hello dear,” she said, looking up at Steve with a knowing smile.

Steve felt like he’d left his clothes in his truck. She knew exactly what he looked like naked and she approved.

“Hi,” Steve replied. Standing next to her, he realized that she was no taller than Danny but her imposing presence made her seem taller than Steve. He was a little surprised that she was wearing ballet flats rather than high heels. He’d expected four inch stilettos.

“Come in. Danny’s here, as you know. He’s unharmed and still dressed,” she laughed as they entered her mansion. The foyer was as imposing as the outside, marble floors and columns supporting the curving stairway.

She led him down a bright hallway to an enclosed porch with comfortable white wicker furniture. Practically every surface was filled with plants - orchids, African violets, miniature roses. This was her sanctuary, Steve knew. A place she never brought anyone but close friends. He found that interesting.

Danny was sitting on a wicker love seat, smiling up at Steve. “Hey babe.”

“Hey,” Steve said. “How was driving the Ferrari?”
“A dream,” Danny confirmed as Steve sat down next to him. Michelle sat in a wicker chair separated from them by a glass top wicker coffee table.

“It’s quite lovely,” Michelle said with a smile. “He was promising me a drive as you arrived.”

Any reply either of them could have made was delayed by the arrival of a round woman in traditional chef’s apparel, black and white checked pants with double breasted white coat. She was carrying a silver tray with a matching tea set and three porcelain cups. The tray also contained fresh scones, filling the air with delicious smells of cinnamon.

“Thank you, Agnes. I’ll pour,” Michelle said as the chef placed the tray on the table.

“Alert me if you need anything further,” Agnes said with a faint German accent.

“You know that I will,” Michelle said as Agnes left them. “How do you take your tea, my dears?”

“Plain for me,” Steve requested, accepting the delicate saucer and cup, sure if he looked at it wrong it would crumble.

“A splash of milk,” Danny said, sipping from his cup when she had handed it to him. “Perfect.”

“Won’t you have a scone?” Michelle invited. “Agnes is an artist when it comes to scones.”

Danny and Steve agreed there was no way they could refuse, each of them putting a still-warm scone on an equally fragile looking plate with a healthy dollop of clotted cream.

“My ex-wife used to make scones with clotted cream,” Danny remarked as he broke off a piece to taste.

“I’ve heard she was a woman of many talents,” Michelle said in sympathy.

“She was,” Danny agreed, nothing further to add than that.

“Tell me about Club Four-Four-Five,” Michelle invited, sitting back to tuck her legs beneath her as she sipped her tea.

They told her everything, finding her incredibly easy to confide in. Steve assumed that was one of the reasons she’d chosen her profession – people came to her to reveal their deepest secrets and pay the price they could pay no other way.

“You have done your homework,” Michelle said in approval. “November 1.”

“The shake-down will last until Thanksgiving,” Danny agreed.

“That is a very astute choice on your part,” Michelle said. “There are always unforeseen circumstances.”

“The pool should be installed by then,” Danny added.

“A pool is a must,” Michelle confirmed.

“The house has a full basement,” Steve said. “Native stones and slate floor. It also comes with
Michelle laughed at that, nodding. “Even better.”

“We aren’t aware of any of our clients who would avail themselves of the services you could provide but that doesn’t mean we don’t want to have them available. And the Club won’t be exclusively for our current clients,” Steve said.

“We share a handful of clients,” Michelle said. “They talk about you. I suppose they never mention me.”

“I’ve never seen any signs that they have visited you,” Danny confirmed.

“I’m extremely careful with those who don’t want it to show,” she said.

“We don’t think we’d require your particular services full time,” Steve said although it sounded more like a question than a statement of fact.

“No, dear. On demand or at most one day a week,” she said.

“Would you be willing to work for us, on an as-needed basis?” Danny asked.

“Thank you, dear, but no. I have more clients than I have time,” she said. “But I do have a list of those who are available and capable.” She reached an elegant arm encircled in a diamond bracelet over to the small round table next to her chair where her cup rested. She extended a handwritten list of a dozen names, each with a phone number next to it. Some also had websites. “All of these have trained here. I will vouch for each of them.”

Steve and Danny studied the list. They recognized a couple of the names but not all of them.

“Will you join the club? We’re able to provide a substantial discount to friends,” Danny said with a smile.

“That could be awkward for all concerned,” Michelle said.

“You must run into your clients around town already. We do,” Danny said.

“There is that,” Michelle said. “Perhaps I will accept your offer. Especially as you will have a gambling cruise as well.”

“Do you think we should have…mmm… you know,” Danny said, waving at himself and Steve in explanation, “…on the boat?”

“Horizontal benefits?” Michelle laughed.

“Precisely,” Danny said.

“I would recommend against it,” she said. “If your married clients want to bring their spouses onto the boat, there doesn’t need to be any mixed signals.”

“There is that,” Danny agreed. He looked to Steve who confirmed with a nod.
“If we don’t need all the cabins we can expand the dining room by taking out a couple of the walls,” Steve said.

“Then more people will be able to gamble at once,” Danny said.

“Will the ship sail every night?” Michelle asked.

“We figured it would,” Steve said. “Casinos are open year round, all day.”

“It wasn’t meant as a criticism, dear. Merely a question,” Michelle said with an understanding smile.

“I’m sorry,” Steve said.

“We’re a little overwhelmed,” Danny admitted.

“You both have very full agendas,” she agreed. “Killing a Yakuza boss will cause unease in anyone.”

“Technically it can only be proved that I kidnapped him,” Steve said with a smile.

“Indeed,” Michelle said with a nod.

“We should go. We’ve taken enough of your time already,” Danny said, putting his cup and plate on the coffee table.

“There’s no rush, dear,” Michelle said warmly. “Agnes is making Cornish hens for lunch. I’d enjoy your company if you have the time to stay.”

“Oh,” Danny said, looking over at Steve. “This is something of a surprise.”

“I am very accomplished at surprises,” Michelle laughed. “I cleared my schedule until later this afternoon.”

“Then we’d like to stay,” Steve agreed, relaxing back in the loveseat. “Do you know the chef of Stanton Street? We’d like to bribe him away to work for us.”

“No, dear, I don’t. I naturally know who he is but he is not an acquaintance.”

“We haven’t approached him yet,” Steve said. “We don’t want the Stantons to be angry with us.”

“The Stantons are petty people who managed to open an outstanding restaurant. Luring Trent away will be a bonus for all involved, other than the Stantons,” Michelle said, the first hint of anything other than humor in her tone.

“I’ve never met the Stantons,” Danny said. “I have heard they are brutal to work for.”

“You may be able to hire away their entire staff,” Michelle said. “They are well trained yet have no loyalty to the owners. And there is no blame to place except on the Stantons themselves.”

“That is good intel,” Steve said with a nod.

“And if Stanton Street is ruined, well, that’s unfortunate,” Michelle said with a cold smile. Her
expression scared Danny and he was just having tea. He couldn’t imagine how that look made her clients feel.

They discussed other details about the club, Michelle offering excellent insight and advice. They asked if they could consult with her on a regular basis, and with a laugh she agreed. Her only fee would be the opportunity to drive the Ferrari.

“Not that it’s our business,” Danny admitted. “But why not buy your own?”

“I don’t know, dear,” she admitted. “It seems overly extravagant. The house is for appearances. Some clients contend my fees are exorbitant. Buying such an …ostentatious car would appear to be substantiating their claims.”

“I can see that,” Danny agreed. “I never meant to own one. But when SEAL-boy decides something, nothing short of dynamite will dislodge the idea.”

Michelle laughed in delight at his description. “I now see why the entire island believes you are already married.”

“We may as well be,” Danny grumped. His supposed indignation was ruined by the smile he reserved solely for Steve.

“You should be so lucky,” Steve teased, leaning closer to kiss Danny’s cheek.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Danny said, his act fooling exactly no one.

“Do you have an office?” Michelle asked, a trace of laughter lingering in her voice.

“We’ll have one at the club,” Steve said.

“You need one in advance of opening,” she pointed out. “You don’t want to hold interviews in your house. And you cannot wait to begin hiring when the club is ready.”

“We hadn’t thought of that,” Danny admitted. “It isn’t on Kono’s spreadsheet.”

“Kono Kalakaua is one for the ages,” Michelle said, a tone of distinct approval in her voice.

“Are you one of her many cousins?” Steve asked with a laugh.

“I would like to be so fortunate,” Michelle said. “I met her while she was still surfing professionally. I am a sports massage therapist by training.”

“We need massage therapists,” Danny said, Michelle nodding.

“Indeed you do,” she agreed.

“Do you have any you would recommend?” Steve asked.

“Not currently. I will construct a list and provide it to you,” she said. “I have a friend who has an office building on the edge of Honolulu. It’s on your side of the island. He would be able to rent you space in the interim at a considerable discount.”
“Thank you,” Danny said. “That will make things simpler. We’ll put three desks there, including one for Kono.”

“She will require one,” Michelle agreed, providing her friend’s name and phone number. “I’ll alert him to expect your call.”

Steve didn’t recognize the name but that wasn’t too much of a surprise. Everything else about Michelle was and he found he liked it.

“Right, Steve?” Danny said, waiting expectantly for his confirmation.

“I’m sorry. I missed what you said,” Steve admitted.

“I was saying we were limiting the number of members to 445,” Danny repeated.

“Right,” Steve agreed. “We may never reach that number but membership won’t exceed that.”

“An excellent plan,” Michelle said. “Will overnight accommodations be provided?”

“That’s something we aren’t sure of,” Danny said. “The house has five bedrooms. The master suite is in its own wing so we could rent it out. Ideally we’d like to have guest cottages on the property.”

“That would be advantageous,” Michelle agreed. “You could purchase the ones which are pre-fabricated. I’ve been inside several homes built in that manner. You would never know if the owners didn’t inform you.”

“That could work,” Steve said. “They will be faster and cheaper. They don’t need to be very big at all.”

“A bedroom and a bathroom,” Danny said.

“We’ll Google it when we get home,” Steve said to Danny’s nods.

“Isn’t Google a modern marvel?” Michelle said.

“It’s how I found you,” Steve said. “I’m pretty sure you couldn’t find us via Google.”

“You’ve never checked?” she inquired with a laugh.

“It’s never occurred to me to try,” Danny said. “I’m afraid my search results would be about stealing from the evidence locker.”

“Which you clearly did not do,” Michelle said. “Would yours be mainly service related?”

“Probably,” Steve said. “Most of my missions are classified but you’d discover I was a SEAL.”

Any further discussion about Google or SEALs was delayed by Agnes’ announcement that lunch was ready. Michelle thanked her and led Steve and Danny to a cozy dining room just off the kitchen.

The food and conversation were both outstanding and they were reluctant to leave. But Michelle promised to keep in touch and would certainly join the Club as soon memberships were available.
Steve watched Danny drive away in his Ferrari, smiling at the sight of his blond bundle of energy behind the wheel. Steve drove to the architecture’s office, getting a copy of the blueprints from the receptionist with no trouble.

He had reentered his truck when Danny called.

“What did you do with my Camaro?” Danny demanded.

“What?” Steve said, utterly confused.

“My Camaro. It’s not here. Where did you put it?”

“I didn’t do anything with it, Danny. It was in the driveway when I left this morning,” Steve assured him.

“Well it isn’t here now. It’s gone. Vanished.”

“Call Chin and file a report. Clearly someone has stolen it,” Steve said with a frown.

“You didn’t drive it off to some undisclosed location for super secret SEAL activities?”

“No, Danno. It was there when I left,” Steve repeated.

“All right. I’ll call Chin,” Danny said, unhappiness in his voice.

Danny was still standing in the driveway when Steve arrived, looking intently down at the ground. “Chin’s on his way.”

“Any signs of tire tracks?” Steve asked, going to his hands and knees.

“Since it hasn’t rained lately, there aren’t any visible,” Danny said.

“Maybe now you won’t complain so much about the rain,” Steve suggested. He was sitting back on his haunches, looking up at Danny.

“Oh please,” Danny said. “Could you concentrate?”

“On what? How pissed you are? It’d be hard to miss that.”

Danny frowned even more although Steve wouldn’t have thought it possible. “Why would somebody steal the Camaro?”

“Why does anyone steal cars?” Steve asked.

“You think it’s being chopped up as we speak?” Danny asked.

“It’s likely,” Steve said.

“Great. Just great,” Danny said, watching as Chin drove up on his motorcycle. “Hey.”

“Camaro’s gone?” Chin asked, looking down at Steve after glancing over at Danny.
“I left the house at 9:45 and it was in the driveway,” Steve said.

“I left at 8:30 and it was here,” Danny said.

“Well clearly it was here at 8:30 if it was here at 9:45,” Steve pointed out.

“Shut up,” Danny responded, otherwise ignoring him.

“I’ll put a BOLO on it but the chances of finding it aren’t very good,” Chin said. “It doesn’t have a GPS locator any longer, right?”

“No. HPD was kind enough to remove it when I was fired.”

“You’re going to put one on this baby, aren’t you?” Chin said, gazing in admiration at the Ferrari.

“It already has one,” Steve said. “Comes standard.”

“I should hope so,” Danny said.

“Give me your license plate and registration number. I’ll see what I can do,” Chin said, following them into the house which was thankfully undisturbed.

Danny provided all the information, thanking Chin for his help.

“Doubt you’ll ever see it again,” Chin said in warning as he left, a last lingering look at Danny’s Ferrari.

“I blame you,” Danny said, looking up at Steve.

“How is this in any way shape or form my fault?”

“I didn’t say it’s your fault. I said I’m blaming you,” Danny said, flopping on the couch to frown up at Steve.

“Well, in the case, carry on,” Steve said, sitting next to him. “I’m sorry, babe.”

“Me too. If we don’t find it, I’ll need another car.”

“I know,” Steve said. “We’ll buy you a new Camaro if that’s what you want.”

Danny shrugged at that, leaning more heavily against him. “It feels like such a ….violation.”

“It is,” Steve said. “What can I do to help?”

“Will you come for a run with me? That always helps.”

“Of course. Unless I can talk you into swimming with me,” Steve said, kissing his head.

Danny sighed but didn’t otherwise respond.

“Running is fine,” Steve assured him, standing to reach down a hand.
“You got the blueprints?” Danny asked as they went upstairs to change.

“They are in the truck. Do you want me to cancel with George tomorrow?” Steve asked as he pulled off his polo to put on a beat-up tee shirt.

“Why would you cancel with George?” Danny asked as he also pulled on a ratty tee.

“If you would feel safer,” Steve said with a shrug.

“Safer,” Danny said, shaking his head. “I used to be a cop, you know. I still own a gun.”

“I know all of that,” Steve said, looking at him with something like…pleading in his face.

“Why are you worried, babe? Some knucklehead stole my car. That’s all there is to it.”

Steve pulled him close, wrapping his arms around Danny like he had no intention of ever letting him go. “I’m sure it’s a coincidence.”

“You think my Camaro’s disappearance is connected to Hiro’s?” Danny asked, leaning back enough to look up at Steve’s worried face.

“Chin says it takes a hell of a lot of planning for those sorts of coincidences to occur,” Steve reminded him.


“What does that mean?” Steve asked with a laugh.

“I don’t know,” Danny admitted. “It’s like ‘get your party on’?”

“Huh,” Steve said, pulling on his running shoes as Danny tied his.

“I shouldn’t watch so much TV,” Danny had to admit.

“I don’t care,” Steve said. “You can speak nothing but gibberish and I’ll figure it out.”

“I’m sure you will,” Danny said with a tender smile. “Come on. Let’s go run out my frustration.”

“Try to keep up.” Steve said, dashing downstairs and out of the house. It didn’t take long for Danny to catch up, smacking Steve’s fine ass as he passed him on the beach.
Chapter Summary

Steve and Danny have visitors with questions about Hiro Noshimuri.

A thing may happen and be a total lie; another thing may not happen and be truer than the truth.
~Tim O'Brien, The Things They Carried

They didn’t run for particularly long, returning to the house for a quick swim before getting into the shower.

“How is Phyllis?” Steve asked when they were lounging in the beach chairs with two cool drinks.

“A little better?” Danny said. “She is probably going to work for us.”

“Probably?” Steve repeated, looking over at Danny.

“She has a job offer in Iowa. She was ready to take it when I told her about the club. She thinks if she leaves the island, she might heal faster.”

“But her friends are here. Her home is here,” Steve said in sympathy.

“She knows that. She’s torn but she’s still not thinking completely clearly. I told her she should decide when she’s ready. The job is hers if she wants it. If not, we’ll find someone else.”

“Good,” Steve said with a nod. “Do you think you could call Trent about leaving Stanton Street tomorrow?”

“Isn’t that a little early?”

“He’ll need to give notice. And if we hire him now, he can decide about the kitchen and expanding the dining room. Plus he can hire his own staff.”

“I’ll see if I can find his number. I wonder if he’s related to Chin and Kono,” Danny said.

“He’s not Hawaiian,” Steve laughed.

“Aren’t they related to nearly everyone on the islands?”

“Possibly. I called Michelle’s friend with the building on the way home. He’ll meet us there Monday to look at the space he has available.”

“Is Kono available?” Danny asked.

“I don’t know. It’s only temporary. If she doesn’t like it, we won’t be there for long,” Steve reminded him.
“There is that,” Danny said. “I’ll go tomorrow and buy three new computers. So we don’t mix our personal ones with the club ones.”

“That’s a good idea. Get four so Jonathan will have one as well. One printer?”

“For now. If we need more, we’ll buy them. I’ll call the phone company about a number. See how many 445s we can get.”

“Then we’ll need company cell phones. Go to the Apple store and see if you can get a bundle – four Mac Books and four iPhones,” Steve suggested.

“They don’t usually discount but I’ll ask,” Danny agreed. “Will we have the appraisals for Stan tomorrow night?”

“I think so? He arranged them. He should know the timeline. If not, we still know how much we need.”

“We’d need less if somebody hadn’t bought a Ferrari,” Danny pointed out.

“Totally untrue,” Steve retorted. “We could pay cash for the house and the boat. But that’s not economically prudent.”

“Whatever,” Danny said, turning toward the house. “Was the doorbell?”

“Maybe,” Steve said, going up to the house to open the front door. “Can I help you?” he said to the two men standing on the other side.

“Steve McGarrett?” the one of the right asked. He and the second man reached into their blazer pockets, pulling out their ID cards which proclaimed they were with the FBI.

“I’m Steve McGarrett,” Steve confirmed. The FBI. He expected HPD not the Feds.

“We have a few questions we’d like to ask you in connection with the disappearance of one Hiro Noshimuri,” the second man said.

“Do I need to call my lawyer?” Steve asked, looking over at Danny when he came into the living room.

“Not unless you want to chat with him. May we come in?” the first man asked.

Steve backed up, allowing the two men to enter. They were wearing black suits with white shirts and thin black ties. All he could think of was Men in Black. He and Danny had watched it a couple of nights before. Did these men think Hiro was abducted by aliens?

“This is Danny Williams. But you probably know that,” Steve said to the two agents who had no visible reaction to his statement.

“Can I get you something to drink?” Danny asked politely.

“A glass of water if it’s no trouble,” the Will-Smith of the two requested.

“Nothing for me,” the Tommy-Lee-Jones-wannabe responded.
“I’m Miller, Branch Miller. This is Van Norman,” the one who was not, after all, Will Smith said.

“What can I do for you?” Steve asked, sitting in his recliner after inviting the FBI guys to sit on the couch.

“What do you know about Hiro Noshimuri vanishing off the face of the Earth?” Van Norman asked.

Danny had returned, giving Branch Miller his water and a refilled glass for Steve.

“The last time I saw him, he was alive and well,” Steve said.

“We do not believe you killed him,” Branch Miller said. “We do believe you know of his current whereabouts.”

“I have no idea,” Steve said honestly.

“Where is he right now?” Van Norman asked.

“I don’t have any intel to provide,” Steve said.

“We need what information you do possess,” Miller said.

“I can’t give you information I don’t have. I don’t know where he is.”

“You are claiming you were not involved with his disappearance?” Norman said.

“Hiro is, or possibly was, a man with many enemies. I am not one of them,” Steve said.

“Yet the Camaro has gone missing, the very Camaro we have reason to believe you used to facilitate Noshimuri’s disappearance,” Norman said.

“Someone stole my Camaro from our driveway,” Danny said. “While we were out this morning.”

“That’s quite a convenient coincidence,” Miller said.

“What are you really after?” Danny asked, his voice hard.

“The current location of Hiro Noshimuri. We believe Commander McGarrett knows where he is,” Norman said.

“I do not,” Steve said.

“Is the mysteriously appearing two million dollars connected with his disappearance?” Norman asked.

“Or is that another convenient coincidence?” Miller said.

“It’s from an anonymous benefactor,” Danny said, the FBI men looking unconvinced. “Why are you so interested in Hiro?”

“We are not at liberty to discuss on-going investigations,” Van Norman informed him.

“Classified,” Norman said.

“Where did you dispose of the Camaro?” Miller asked, watching Steve closely.

“It was parked in the driveway, in its usual place, until it was stolen this morning. We filed a police report as soon as we discovered it gone,” Steve said for what felt like the third or fourth time.

“Very convenient,” Norman said.

“Convenient or not, it was stolen from the driveway. Maybe you should use some of your classified investigatorial skills to locate it for us,” Danny suggested.

Norman looked over at him, squinting slightly. “You can be certain that is being undertaken as we speak.”

“Good. You can get it back to me,” Danny said.

“Not when it is material evidence in an investigation,” Norman corrected.

“You have no evidence that the Camaro was used for anything more illegal than driving over the speed limit,” Danny said.

“Once we find the car, we’ll find the evidence,” Norman said.


“Did you drive too fast when you had Noshimuri with you?” Miller asked.

“What makes you think I ever drove with Noshimuri?” Steve asked. “He has a chauffeur from what I’ve heard. I can assure you I am not him.”

“You are a prostitute,” Norman said.

“You can’t prove that either,” Steve said, standing abruptly. He had a hard, unyielding expression on his face. Danny thought it was a very good thing he wasn’t armed. It would be hard to explain the death of two FBI agents in their living room. “We are done with this conversation.”

“You being done and us being done are not the same,” Norman informed him.

Danny stepped in front of Steve before he could make a move toward the agent. “If you have any further questions for either of us, we’ll meet in your office. And our lawyer will be with us.”

“Call your lawyer,” Norman said with a definitive nod before going to the front door to let himself out.

Miller lingered behind for a moment. “I’ll calm him down. We’ll call if we need anything else.”

Steve gave one curt nod, watching Branch leave.
“Well,” Danny said, turning around to look up at Steve’s way-past-aneurysm-face. “You are quite the accomplished liar. I feel like I should call Billy and apologize.”

“I didn’t tell any lies,” Steve said, anger still in his voice. “Every word I said was true.”


“Why are you so fucking calm? Why aren’t you outraged?” Steve demanded, breathing hard through his nose. It was not helping him to dispel any of his anger.

“Because they are idiots. They have no evidence that you had anything to do with Hiro’s disappearance. This was a fishing expedition, see if you’d incriminate yourself or tell them where he was.”

“Oh,” Steve said, deflating slightly. “You’re right. I shouldn’t have let them get under my skin.”

“You handled them perfectly until he decided to call you a whore. That was a bad move on his part.”

“Prostitue. I’m a prostitute,” Steve said, sitting in his recliner and pulling Danny into his lap.

“Former prostitute as of today,” Danny said, kissing him gently. “We better call Sam, just in case.”

“Yeah. Billy’s going to be really pissed at me,” Steve said.

“He can’t prove anything either. I do wonder who stole the Camaro and why,” Danny said.

“Someone trying to find Hiro probably. It won’t help them. He was very thorough. The henchman who drove me back went through a car wash.”

“That’s smart,” Danny said, reaching into his pocket for his phone. He put it on speaker, calling Sam.

“I’m only answering because it’s you,” Sam claimed.

“Thank you,” Danny responded, trying not to laugh. “We were just visited by two FBI agents.”

“I wish I were surprised,” Sam said. “What happened?”

Danny recounted the visit, including Norman’s parting shot about Steve being a prostitute.

“And the Camaro was stolen? Really?” Sam asked.

“My lips to God’s ear, it was in the driveway when we left this morning. It was stolen while we were gone,” Danny said.

“I’ll get the police report from Chin,” Sam said. “If the FBI contacts you again, don’t talk to them until you call me. If I’m not available, I’ll send Holly to represent you.”

“All right,” Danny agreed. “Thanks.”

“Please try to stay out of trouble for at least the next 24 hours,” Sam requested.
“We’ll do what we can,” Danny promised, hanging up.

“I should call Billy,” Steve said, still holding tight to Danny.

“Ehhh…fuck him – not literally. But he’s already pissed at you. And he thinks you lied to him so what’s the point of telling him different,” Danny said.

“I should have told Hiro no,” Steve said. He rested his forehead against Danny’s shoulder, the magnitude of what he’d agreed to do feeling too burdensome at the moment.

“You are too kindhearted not to agree to kill him,” Danny laughed. “This too shall pass, babe. Then our lives will be the usual kind of fucked-up. Not clusterfuck fucked up.”

“That’s a day-brightener,” Steve said.

“I’m here for you, big guy. Always.”

“I know that,” Steve said, looking up at him. “I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

“Yours was a sad and lonely existence until I arrived in it,” Danny said.

“Truer words have never been said,” Steve agreed, groaning at the angry knock on the door.

“Billy?”


“I know you’re home, McGarrett. Open the door or I will knock it in,” Billy yelled.

Danny left Steve’s lap and opened the front door, getting out of the way before Billy knocked him flat.

Steve was standing, adopting a defensive stance.

“You fucking liar,” Billy said, taking a swing at him. Steve easily dodged it, grabbing Billy’s arm and wrenching it up, immobilizing Billy.

“Every word I said was true, Harrington,” Steve said. “I have never lied to you. Never.”

“You think I believe you? You fucking liar.”

“He did not lie, Billy,” Danny said. “Steve, you might want to let him go before you dislocate his shoulder.”

“All your talk of honor and honesty. You make me sick,” Billy said, taking a step away from Steve. “You are a disgrace to the service.”

“Okay,” Steve said.

“Okay? That’s all you have to say? Okay?” Billy demanded.

“You’ve made up your mind. I can tell you again that I did not lie to you. But to what ends? You believe I did. You believe anything I say now is a lie. Call me names. Destroy the last shreds of our
friendship. I can’t do anything to stop you,” Steve said in what Danny thought was a reasonable argument.

“Did you kill him?” Billy asked, each word bolded and italics.

“No,” Steve said. “Who is your source?”

“I can’t tell you that,” Billy said, pacing the living room floor. “This is out of control.”

“What is?” Danny asked when Steve didn’t.

“I feel like I’m caught in the middle,” Billy said.

“You are,” Danny agreed. “Stop listening to whoever it is that’s lying to you. Not that they should have much more to say now that Hiro is out of the picture.”

“Is he dead?” Billy asked Steve. Apparently asking once was insufficient.

“The last time I saw him, he was alive and well,” Steve replied.

Billy nodded, apparently settling things in his mind. Without another word, he left, carefully closing the door behind him.

“We need to check into a hotel,” Danny said, sounding exhausted.

“We should go see if room 445 is available,” Steve agreed. “We can’t take our phones if we go.”

“I guess we’ll ride out the storm here,” Danny decided. “Did we have dinner?”

Steve huffed a laugh at that, shaking his head. “We’ve hardly had time. You want to order pizza?”

“I don’t know,” Danny said, dropping onto the couch to look up at Steve. “With our luck, one of Hiro’s nephews will deliver it and try to kill you.”

“Probably,” Steve had to agreed, sitting next to him. “I promise that the next time a mob boss asks me to kill him, I’ll say no.”

“No you won’t,” Danny said, looking at Steve with love in his eyes. “You’ll do the right thing no matter what it might cost you.”

“I didn’t owe him anything, Danno. I could have said no,” Steve said, trying to sort it out for himself.

“It’s who you are, babe. You did the right thing, helping him. Don’t let the assholes make you question that.”

“I’ve endangered you. That’s all that worries me,” Steve said.

“Again. Ex-cop. With a gun. I’ll be fine,” Danny assured him with a kiss. “Let’s order pizza. If the delivery guy pulls a gun, you’ll punch him into submission.”

“Maybe I’ll punch him no matter what,” Steve said. “Relieve some frustration.”
Danny shook his head at that, dialing their regular place and asking for their regular order. “No pineapple this time, Al.”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Al responded, hanging up before Danny could respond.

“Here,” Steve said, giving Danny a cold beer and sitting down next to him. “Let’s watch something mindless on TV.”

“Good idea,” Danny said, reaching over for the remote to give it to Steve. He flipped channels until they settled on a show that was predicting storms for the upcoming seasons.

“It’s a lot of guesswork,” Steve told him when Danny asked. “They study air currents, ocean tides, pressure systems. They like to say it’s science but there are so many variables, they can’t be any more accurate than they are.”

“We’ll need a contingency plan for storms and tsunamis,” Danny said, watching the wind whip up the ocean on the screen.

“You know what else we need?” Steve said. “A parking lot.”

“Well hell,” Danny said, looking over at him. “That seems like a pretty major detail for us to have overlooked. Think it’s on Kono’s spreadsheet?”

“She hasn’t mentioned it,” Steve said. “One acre can hold between 130 and 150 cars depending on how closely parked they are and how much is left for travel lanes.”

“How in God’s name do you know that?” Danny asked in amazement.

Steve shrugged. “I have no idea where I learned it. But I do know that the Pentagon has a parking area of 67 acres with a capacity of roughly 8,770 cars, again depending on the size of the vehicles. That works out to approximately 130 cars per acre.”

“Inconceivable,” Danny said.

“You keep saying that word. I don’t think it means what you think it means.”

“Probably not,” Danny laughed. “Is there a solid acre of land at the house we can use for parking?”

“There’s a flat half acre along the top portion of the drive. We’ll have valets, naturally,” Steve said.

“Naturally. What about when it’s raining?”

“We’ll make sure there’s adequate drainage. I wonder how hard it would be to build a car wash, just in case.”

“A half acre will hold about 65 or so cars,” Danny said, considering this startling information in Steve’s possession. “Is that enough space?”

“Probably. The employees will need to park too,” Steve reminded him. “We may have to clear a few of the trees to make sure there is enough room.”

“Yeah,” Danny said, getting up the answer the door. He paid the delivery guy, giving him the usual
generous tip. “When we were discussing the club initially, you said the club could accommodate 45 patrons a day. Is that still valid?”

“That was for horizontal recreational purposes,” Steve said. “But that’s probably too many in one day. Depending on how big we make the dining room, we could accommodate up to 100 people in one day.

“So a half acre might not be enough,” Danny said.

“It will slow down the valets but no one is going to have walk up the hill after they park. Except the valets.”

“Right,” Danny said, eating half a slice in one go.

“Slow down, babe. I’m not planning to steal your pizza.”

“Right, right. I’m sorry,” Danny said, accepting a napkin to wipe his mouth. “I’ll look at prefab buildings tomorrow for guesthouses.”

“Don’t take on too much,” Steve said. “We’ll get it all done.”

“I know,” Danny said with a smile. “I guess I’m excited.”

“Me too,” Steve agreed. “We need to have the house painted. I’m not crazy for his antique white on white.”

“Something a little more lively,” Danny agreed. “And Hawaiian. With surfboards and… you know.”

“We’ll buy some antique boards if we can find them. So they’re wooden instead of fiberglass.”

“Good,” Danny said. “We need to decorate with as many local arts as we can.”

“Excellent idea. Support the local economy. Attract more buyers to the local artists,” Steve said.

“You know what?” Danny said, a gleam of excitement in his eyes.

“What’s that?” Steve asked.

“While we’re having the shakedown, we could have local artists come and offer their art for sale. On one of the Saturdays or Sundays. That would get us in good with them and our potential members would be introduced to people they may never otherwise meet.”

“That’s…” Steve smiled, nodding. “Yes. I like the way you think.”

“I know that you do,” Danny agreed, smiling. “We still need to identify people we trust to hire to ‘service’ our members.”

“I have three people I’m pretty sure will do it,” Steve said. “I haven’t talked to them yet but it will be easier to work for us than stay independent.”

“They’ll be on salary, right? Like the other employees?”
“Exactly. They may make a little less working for us rather than themselves, but they’ll have benefits, and their clients will be pre-screened,” Steve said.

“Benefits. Shit. We have to find group coverage,” Danny said.

“I’m sure that’s on Kono’s spreadsheet,” Steve said.

“Yeah,” Danny said. “I set up a dropbox for the club. I texted her and asked her to put it there. I’m pretty sure she did already.”

“Good. I think I’m ready for bed,” Steve decided after he’d eaten three slices and finished his beer.

“Me too,” Danny agreed, looking at the one lone slice left. “You want it?”

“Nah,” Steve said, getting up to dispose of the box and the empty bottles. “Are you getting up with me tomorrow?”

“What time are you leaving? About 8 or so?”

“I think 8:30,” Steve said, going upstairs with him.

“I’ll get up then. You can make me pancakes before you abandon me for the day,” Danny decided.

DONE,” Steve agreed, making Danny laugh.
The Absence of Steve

Chapter Summary

Steve goes sailing. Danny goes shopping for equipment for the Club.

*I wrote an ad for Apple Computer: "Macintosh - We might not get everything right, but at least we knew the century was going to end." ~Douglas Adams*

*The simple lack of [him] is more to me than others' presence. ~Edward Thomas*

Steve had left at 8:25, much as he said he would. Danny drove his Ferrari, which he still couldn’t believe was his, downtown after he’d cleaned up from breakfast. He first went to the Apple store with its spacious parking lot. He wasn’t going to be one of those inconsiderate assholes who took up two space but he would be one of those cautious individuals who parked in the far reaches of the lot so no one would need to park near him. Maybe eventually he would park as close to the stores as possible but until that time, he’d give the rest of the cars as wide a berth as possible.

When he entered the Apple store, a blue-shirted, enthusiastic young woman with purple hair and a ring through her left nostril asked what she could do for him.

“I’d like to know if I can get a discount on four computers and four phones,” he told her, watching her face go through several expressions before settling on skeptical.

“If you don’t mind waiting right here, I’ll find someone higher up that can help you,” she said. When he nodded, she left him by the door in order to have an animated whispered conversation with a coworker. The slightly older young man looked over at Danny before asking the woman a question. She shrugged and the young man disappeared behind a highly polished metal door that Danny thought would look right at home on the Abrams’ Enterprise. It might have been part of the set for all he knew. Then he decided it would be way too expensive to have it shipped to Hawaii and it was the standard door leading to the mysteries of the Apple storeroom.

As Danny was waiting for Captain Kirk or the Apple store manager to beam to his current coordinates, his phone vibrated. He smiled to see the text from Steve.

*George has appt @ 4. I'll be home @ 2*

*Okay. Have fund. Fun I mean*

*I have funds*

*As I know all too well,* Danny responded, getting a smiley face in reply.

“May I help you?” a man not too many years younger than Danny asked. He had on a ‘regular person’s’ button down shirt in a less loud shade of blue than that surrounding him, and had about him an air of authority. Danny figured either he would be of assistance or would insist that Danny leave his store immediately.
“I would like to purchase four iPhones and four computers. As such, I’d like to know what sort of discount you could provide,” Danny said.

“I see,” the man responded. “Did you want to purchase those today?”

“Yes,” Danny said, looking around the store that seemed to be filled with computers. “Will that be a problem?”

“No, no problem at all,” the man said, still looking like he was one minute away from calling the police.

“Good,” Danny said. “Is there a discount you can provide?”

“We have a special going at the moment,” the man said. “If you buy two computers, you get an iPhone for free.”

“Then when I buy four computers, I’ll get two free phones,” Danny said, wondering if he sounded like a kindergarten teacher to the other man or if that was how he sounded only inside his own head.

“Yes,” the man agreed slowly. “Are these computers for home or office?”

“Office. But they need to be laptops,” Danny said.

“All right,” the man said. “We have just what you need, Mr…..”

“Williams,” Danny filled in for him. “And your name?”

“Marc Young,” he said, taking him to the counter that had the most powerful laptops in the store. “These will provide all the computing power you will need.”

Danny asked about the technical specifications, double checking with Chin before setting out on his shopping expedition. Marc Young answered each of his questions thoroughly, becoming more convinced that Danny was serious about his purchase.

“Good,” Danny said. “I’ll take four of these. And I’ll buy two phones plus the two free ones.”

Marc nodded, leading him to a tall table which no one else was using it. “Do you want me to activate the phones?”

“I don’t have the numbers yet,” Danny said. “That’s my next stop.”

“I see,” Marc said. “If you want to go and get the numbers, the phone company is just down the block. We can get your computers from the back and activate your phones when you return.”

“That makes sense,” Danny said, reaching into his pocket for his credit card. “Do you need to hold onto this until I get back?”

“That won’t be necessary. You can pay for them all when you return.”

“All right,” Danny agreed, assuring Marc he’d be back as soon as he secured the numbers.

He walked the half block down to the phone company, wondering if they helped people in person.
All of his previous transactions had been, ironically, over the phone.

He entered the cool building with the ceiling so very far over his head. It was an old building, constructed when beauty wasn’t considered a pointless waste of money. It still had crown moldings and the kind of ceiling with impressions in it. Steve knew the proper name for them but Danny could never remember. They were…embossed, he knew.

As he was contemplating ceilings and Steve and life in general, he was approached by a woman who resembled his mother in ways he couldn’t quite specify.

“Aloha,” she said with a bright smile. “How can we help you?”

Danny explained about needing phone numbers and did they do that in person?

“Of course we can assist you with that,” she assured him, leading him across the highly polished marble floor and through a wooden swinging gate. It was only symbolic as it wouldn’t keep a cat from wandering out of the main area into the office area. Why did they have barriers and gates like those at all? Did they ever serve a functional rather than symbolic purpose? Would Steve know if he were here?

Danny had become accustomed to spending his free time with Steve but until he had entered the building housing the phone company, he hadn’t fully realized how large an impression his absence would make. That’s how it was supposed to be, right? He couldn’t imagine wanting to spend every available minute with anyone else, ever.

He didn’t begrudge Steve his sailing date. It served to reinforce how much he liked having him around. Except that made Steve sound like Danny’s dog, not his boyfriend. But boyfriend seemed like an inadequate description for how he regarded Steve. Soulmate was probably closer to how he felt but he couldn’t use that term in good conscience, not when he wasn’t even sure he believed humans were endowed with souls. And who would have guessed phone numbers would have made him so philosophical.

“Sir?” the woman was saying, leaning slightly forward in her chair. Danny was sitting in the chair beside her desk, from her perspective, staring into space.

“I apologize,” Danny said, giving her what he hoped was a reassuring smile. “My mind wandered.”

“I understand,” she said with a comforting pat on his hand. “How many phone numbers were you interested in?”

“Well,” Danny said, considering the question. “We’re planning to open a private club called Club Four-Four-Five. We’d like the numbers to have as many 445s as possible.”

“Let’s see,” she said, typing into her computer. After hitting tab and enter in successive order several times, she gave him a bright smile. “It looks like we have 445-4450 to 445-4459 available. How many of those would you like?”

“All of them,” Danny said, surprised that they could have so many convenient numbers.

“All of them,” she repeated. “Are you incorporated?”

“The Club’s papers haven’t gone through yet. But I have an LLC. Can we put the numbers under
my name and transfer them?” he asked.

“That will work fine,” she agreed, asking for his tax id number. She typed it in as he gave it to her, her nod encouraging. “Do you have an address for the Club?”

“Yes but we don’t own the property yet. Can we use my PO box? It’s the one on file with my LLC.”

“Certainly,” she said, getting the information from the computer. “Do you have phones?”

“I’m in the process of buying iPhones. They said they would activate them once I had the numbers.”

“Are you getting ten iPhones?” she asked.

“Not yet. We will eventually,” he said. “I don’t have to have phones for the numbers, do I?”

“No, not at all,” she assured him, typing more information into her computer. The printer next to her desk began producing forms which she gathered up and set neatly on her desk. “You’re required to sign this contract. It says you’ll pay the phone bill when it arrives, so on and so forth.”

He nodded and accepted her pen. After glancing over the form, he signed where indicated, initialing two other places that she pointed out with an explanation what his initials were for.

“And that’s it,” she said with a bright smile up at him.

“Thank you so much. I expected it to take much longer,” he admitted.

“I’m glad we could pleasantly surprise you,” she said. “Do you need internet service for your club? We can provide that as well.”

“We will,” he agreed. “But we won’t take possession until August 1. We’ll take care of the internet then.”

“Certainly. Thank you for continued business,” she said, preceding him to open the tiny wooden gate and walk him to the massive glass and brass door. “I hope you have a pleasant rest of your day.”

“Thanks,” Danny said, shaking her hand and walking back to the Apple store. When he entered, Marc was waiting for him by the counter where Danny had left him. “I have the numbers.”

“Excellent,” Marc said, setting up the phones. Once that was done, he totaled the purchases, informing Danny what he owed. Danny handed over his credit card, Marc running it through.

“You’re all set,” Marc said. “Brandon,” he called to one of his workers. “Please help Mr. Williams take these computers to his car.”

Brandon nodded, picking up the four Mac boxes, Danny accepting the four phones in a sturdy
plastic bag.

“Thanks for your help,” Danny said to Marc before leading Brandon out and over to his car.

“She’s a beauty,” Brandon said in admiration when Danny popped the trunk.

“Handles like a dream” Danny said.

“I can only imagine,” Brandon said, putting the computers in the tiny trunk. “Thank you again.”

“You’re welcome,” Danny said, getting into his car and pulling away. Brandon watching until he could no longer see the bright red sports car of his dreams.

Danny’s next stop was for computer desks. The second spare room was still empty but was about to become their office. They’d need an office at home even after they’d secured space in the building Michelle told them about.

He stopped at three furniture stores before he found exactly what he wanted. They were tempered glass and metal, sleek and comfortable. The salesman assured him the desks could be delivered the following day.

“We need chairs,” Danny said, looking at the selections. “Two of these.”

“Certainly,” the man agreed, accepting Danny’s credit card to put his purchases on it.

Next door to the furniture store was a gallery which had on display native arts. Danny wandered in, admiring all of the brightly colored art. Some of the items would definitely need to end up in the Club.

“Hello,” an older man said to Danny when he had wandered up.

“Hi,” Danny replied. “You have beautiful art on display.”

“We are very lucky to have so many talented local artists,” the man agreed. “Is there something specific you are looking to purchase?”

“Not right now. We’re opening a private club and want to decorate it with works from local artist,” Danny explained.

“Very good,” the man said in approval. “I have a catalog which lists all of the artists and their specialties. Would that be of help to you?”

“Absolutely,” Danny said. “We are thinking of having a show right before the club opens. Invite the artists to sell their creations.”

“Outstanding,” the man said. “Our local artists deserve more exposure.”

“I agree,” Danny said. “Is the contact info for the artists in the catalog?”

“Some are listed. Some have chosen not to have it included. If there is someone you wish to contact who is not listed, let me know. I’ll contact them on your behalf.”
“Perfect,” Danny said, pulling one of his business cards out of his wallet. “This is where you can reach me.”

“Excellent,” the man said, providing one of his cards to Danny. It stated that he was Richard Morris, proprietor.

“I’ll be in touch,” Danny said, shaking his hand before leaving. He looked up and down the street, finding a quick print business a block down. He entered and requested business cards be printed, four sets. He filled out the appropriate forms, requesting cards for him, Steve, Kono, and Jonathan, including their phone numbers. He asked if he could get only 50 of each, as they’d need new ones when the logo and website were finalized. Although their usual minimum was 100 cards, the propriety said he’d make an exception as Danny needed a total of 200. With thanks for his help, Danny placed the order, receiving a promise that they’d be ready the next day.

He made a couple of more stops, included the grocery store to make sure he had everything they needed for dinner. He unloaded the computers when he got home, carrying them upstairs to the empty room. A quick check of the time confirmed that the next order of business would be to have lunch. Steve was due home in an hour and a half but he said he was going to eat lunch with George.
Finding Steve

Chapter Summary

Steve’s decision to help Hiro Noshimuri continues to cause trouble.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

_Difficult things take a long time, impossible things a little longer. ~André A. Jackson_

By 3:30, Danny was frantic. He’d called Steve a dozen times, all of the calls going to voicemail. He called George’s phone who also failed to pick up. A call to Meka at HPD got him the name of the marina and slip number for George’s boat. Danny called Steve again as he drove way too fast toward the dock where George and Steve should have returned two hours earlier.

Danny didn’t know what he was planning to do when he got to the marina. He only knew he couldn’t find Steve and that had to be corrected.

Steve’s truck was in the parking lot for visitors to the marina, undisturbed and still locked. The slip number Meka had given him was vacant, just like Danny knew it would be. He stood looking down at the water beside the dock that should not have been empty, taking several deep breaths to see if he could calm down enough to think….think….think.

This marina wasn’t far from the one where Holokai’s boat was docked and Danny remembered seeing a Coast Guard station close by that marina. He returned to his car, driving the short stretch of road to pull into the Coast Guard’s parking lot. It looked like a building built for public access so he didn’t think he would be in trouble for entering.

As the door was closing behind him, he approached the counter behind which two men were monitoring computers and two women were on the phone. All of the Coast Guard sailors were dressed in the same uniform of khaki pants and shirts, only their medals differing. One of the women, the one with her dark hair in a bun, noticed him and held up one finger to indicate she’d be right there.

“I apologize for making you wait,” she said when she was standing opposite from Danny. “How may I help you?”

“My boyfriend went out this morning with a friend. They were due back at 1:30 but they aren’t here. And I can’t reach them. Something’s happened or they would be answering their phones. Did you get reports of boats capsizing?” Danny said it all in a rush, hoping she could understand him.

“They are two and half hours overdue?” she asked, checking her watch.

“Yes. I know it’s not a lot. But when he says he’ll be somewhere at 1:30, he’s there at 1:25,” Danny said. He hoped he didn’t sound like he was pleading with her but he was about to if it would help.
“Two hours is reason for concern, sir,” she assured him. “What is the name or registration of the boat?”

“The boat?” Danny repeated. “I…have no idea. The boat belongs to George Deering.”

She nodded at that, typing into the computer on the counter. “Is it a motorized boat?”

“It may have a motor but they were going sailing,” Danny said, wishing he had more details. But it was just an outing on a sailboat. Steve was a SEAL. What could go wrong?

“Deering you said?” one of the men asked, approaching the counter with a clipboard in his hand.

“Yes. George Deering,” Danny said. “Did you hear anything about his boat?”

“I have a report of a possible Tongan pirate attack,” the man said, showing Danny the clipboard. “A George called it in. He said they had taken his friend Steve. No last name given.”

“Do you have a description of Steve? Did it mention tattoos on his biceps?” Danny asked, feeling like he was about to be sick. Tongans. What would Tongans want with Steve?

“Yes, Mr. Deering said he had elaborate tattoos,” the Coast Guard sailor confirmed.

“Where’s George now?” Danny asked. He may have snapped at them but that was not his intention and he trusted they understood that.

“He’s being towed. His motor was sabotaged and his radio destroyed,” the sailor said, looking at the report. “He managed to flag down a passing leisure boat.”

“Can you call one of your guys so I can talk to George?” Danny asked. “Maybe he knows something about what happened to Steve.”

The sailor checked silently with the woman. At her nod, the sailor went back to his desk, using his radio to contact the sailors with George.

“Is he able to talk to Steve’s friend?” the sailor asked into his headset. Danny could hear a faint reply but not what the words were. “Very good.” The sailor motioned Danny to come through, offering Danny his chair and the headset.

“Hello?” a new voice said.

“George? This is Danny. Steve’s friend,” Danny said in a rush.

“Danny,” George said sounding anxious. “Steve saved me. There were five of them and they were going to kill me but he talked them out of it. He went with them so they’d leave me alone.”

“That’s Steve,” Danny agreed. “Who took him? Do you know?”

“I don’t have any idea. They had bandanas over their faces like they were cowboys. I’m pretty sure at least three of them were Hawaiian. Or Asian maybe. They all spoke perfect English…. I’m sorry,” George said, taking a breath. “That sounded….”

“I understand,” Danny assured him. “Did they say anything that might give me an idea where to start
looking for him?”

“These guys mean business, Danny. They weren’t out joyriding. They were heavily armed.”

“What else did you notice?” Danny asked, hoping George would give them a lead. “What sort of boat were they in?”

“It was one of those fast, low boats. Fast. Painted red and yellow.”

“Red and yellow?” Danny said to the sailor who nodded. “Anything else? Anything at all?”

“Steve said something weird as he was leaving,” George said as he remembered it. “He said he thought they might be interested in a golf date. Does that strike you as odd?”

“No, George, it tells me what I need to know,” Danny said, worry and relief battling for supremacy.

“I’m so sorry, Danny. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help.”

“I will, George. I promise.”

“Thanks,” George said, disconnecting.

“Golf?” the sailor said to Danny, studying his expression for clues.

“I think he was telling me who was behind his kidnapping,” Danny said. “Now I just have to find him.”

“You can’t go vigilante, sir,” the woman said. “We need to contact the police.”

“I’m going to contact the police,” he assured her. “I used to be one. I still have a few friends on the force.”

“We need to be in the loop,” she said. “As the crime occurred at sea, it is officially our jurisdiction.”

Danny nodded, calling Chin. “Hey. I need your help. Steve’s been taken. Off a friend’s boat. Can you come to the Coast Guard station?”

“I’ll be there in ten minutes,” Chin agreed without any additional questions.

“Can I get you a cup of coffee or some water?” the sailor asked Danny.

“Uhhh…yeah. A cup of coffee would be great,” Danny decided. He was about to come out of his skin. Maybe doing something normal would make him feel more grounded, more centered.

He followed the sailor to a tiny, immaculate kitchen, the young man providing him a clean cup for the coffee. They had a single serve coffee maker, every cup hot, fresh, and fast.

“Is your friend an experienced sailor?” the Coast Guard guy asked.

“He was a SEAL,” Danny said, letting the sailor draw his own conclusions.

“He’s retired Navy?” he asked in heightened concern.
“Yes,” Danny agreed.

“I need to tell Captain Rollins,” he said, leaving after promising to be back very shortly. He did return right away, along with the Captain.

“Your friend is a SEAL?” she asked.

“He was,” Danny said. “He retired from the Navy.”

“Could his abduction be related to any of his missions?” she asked him.

“No, I don’t think so,” Danny said. “His comment about the kidnappers golfing was for me. We… well, mostly he… may have made an enemy of someone we ran into on the golf course. He wanted me to know so I could start there.”

“Who did you see on the golf course?” the Captain asked, glancing over at the sailor.

“Wo Fat,” Danny said, watching for her reaction. It was as bad as he had feared. Her naturally ivory complexion became stark white at the news.

“Wo Fat,” she said slowly.

“Steve abducted Hiro Noshimuri. I have to think this isn’t a coincidence.”

“Steve McGarrett? Your friend is Steve McGarrett?” the Captain asked.

“I take it you know him,” Danny said.

“I do… did. We dated briefly,” she said. “A long time ago.”

Danny didn’t have anything in particular to say in response to that. “My friend Lieutenant Chin Ho Kelly will be here soon. We need to find out where Wo Fat is headquartered.”

She nodded. “My name is Catherine Rollins. And you’re Danny Williams, right?”

“Yes,” Danny said. “Is there anything you can do to help us find Wo Fat?”

“We’ve been hunting for him for six months,” Captain Rollins said. “We had a couple of leads but they went nowhere.”

“I’ll take anything you have to help me find Steve,” Danny said.

“Did Steve kill Noshimuri?” Rollins asked.

“I don’t know,” Danny lied. “Steve said the last time he saw him, he was alive and well.”

“Why did Steve abduct him?” Rollins wanted to know.

“I don’t that either. Blood feud? Family vendetta? Sometimes it’s hard to tell what’s going inside Steve’s head.”
“I do remember that,” Rollins agreed. “We don’t know of any ties Noshimuri or the Yakuza have to Wo Fat.”

“They were golfing together…with Tua. I need to call him,” Danny said, taking out his phone.

“You have the phone number of one of the biggest crime bosses on the islands?” the sailor asked, half in awe, half in anger.

“It’s a really long story,” Danny said, waiting as the phone rang. “I need to speak to Tua….Danny Williams….yes, thank you.” He waited for a couple of minutes before Tua picked up.

“What is it you want?” Tua asked. He sounded abrupt but not angry.

“I think Wo Fat has abducted Steve,” Danny said, seeing no reason to dance around it.

“Wo Fat took McGarrett?” Tua repeated.

“Steve was out sailing this morning. Five men took him in a cigarette boat. As he was leaving, he told his friend that the pirates might want a golf date. So unless you abducted Steve, that only leaves Wo Fat,” Danny pointed out.

“Simply because I golfed with Wo Fat doesn’t mean we are close friends,” Tua said.

“But you can contact him. You can find out if he has Steve and if so, where I can go get him back.”

“Do you think I can call him on the phone and say ‘do you have McGarrett?’”

“Yes?” Danny said. Because if Tua wouldn’t or couldn’t do it, he didn’t know how they were going to find Steve.

“It doesn’t work that way, Williams.”

“Wo Fat is going to kill Steve if I don’t find him. Do you want his death on your hands?” Danny asked.

Tua sighed and hung up. Danny knew he’d gotten through to him. He said as much to Chin when he arrived, breathless from his motorcycle ride to the Coast Guard station.

“Does HPD have any intel on Wo Fat’s current location?” Captain Rollins asked Chin after introductions were complete.

“We don’t. He’s a very slippery character,” Chin said. “As I’m sure you know.”

“He is,” Rollins agreed. “If Tua doesn’t call back, we need a way to track Steve and Wo Fat’s whereabouts.”

“His phone?” Chin suggested.

“I’m pretty sure Steve’s phone is at the bottom of the ocean. And what are the chances Wo Fat has a listed number?” Danny said.

“Let’s see,” Chin said, taking out his phone and placing a phone call. “Can you get back to me right
away, Charlie?...great, thanks.” He placed his phone back into his pocket, resting a steady hand on Danny’s shoulder. “They’re checking. And they are intensifying the search for your Camaro. You have more friends left than you realize.”

“That’s nice to hear, especially if it helps us find Steve,” Danny said, trying for calm. He took a deep breath, staring at his phone, willing Tua to call him back. “I need to call Stan and Kono. They’re supposed to come to dinner.”

“I’ll call Kono. She can call Stan,” Chin said.

“Thanks,” Danny agreed. While Chin was making his calls, Danny’s phone buzzed with an incoming text message. There was no return number listed but the text consisted of three addresses. There was no doubt in Danny’s mind who had sent it. “Look,” he said to Chin who had finished his calls.

“Looks like Tua came through,” Chin said. “The first address is on Sand Island. It’s the closest one to here.”

“Then let’s go,” Danny said, heading for the door.

“I need to go with,” Captain Rollins said to one of the sailors. He nodded before getting a gun and three TAC vests out of the locker, handing them to her.

“We’ll take Steve’s truck,” Danny said as Chin got on his motorcycle. “It’s at the next marina.”

“Meet you there,” Chin agreed.

Captain Rollins put the vests in the tiny trunk of the Ferrari before getting into the low slung seat next to Danny. “You should call me Catherine,” she said as Danny drove out of the lot. “I feel like we are sort of related.”

“Thank you for coming with us,” Danny said. “I’m afraid a bigger presence could endanger Steve’s life.”

“I understand that. It’s why I’m here.”

Danny nodded, nothing much else to say as he parked the Ferrari next to Steve’s truck. They put on the TAC vests, Danny getting Steve’s gun out of his glove compartment. As much as Danny complained about having a loaded gun in the truck, in this instance he was grateful it was there. “You’d better drive,” he said to Chin, handing him the keys.

“You got it, brah,” Chin agreed, climbing into the driver’s seat as Catherine got in the back and Danny took the front passenger seat.

“Do you know of any activities Wo Fat is undertaking on Sand Island?” Catherine asked Chin.

“He has properties all over the islands,” Chin said, sounding frustrated. “We’re not sure how many in total.”

“This address in the warehouse district,” Catherine said when she’d gotten it from Danny. “Could be endless blind alleys.”
Chin glanced over at Danny who was staring out the window, apparently not listening. But Chin knew better. Danny’s silence spoke volumes about how anxious he really was. “We’ll have to use extreme caution,” Chin finally agreed.

They made their way to Sand Island at a good pace, Chin slowing down when he got to the portion that contained mostly warehouses. The one they needed was close to the end of the dock, huge and brand new from the looks of it. Chin stopped behind an older building so the three of them could advance on the targeted warehouse by foot, keeping low and close to the building.

Danny stretched up on his toes to peer into the surprisingly clean window. “It’s empty,” he said in a low voice.

“Empty,” Chin repeated, joining him by the window to look in. “Let’s check inside.”

Danny nodded, pointing out a fire escape a few feet down from where they were crouching. They agreed to climb up to see if the building was as deserted as it appeared.

The fire escape remained silent as they climbed it. Chin swung open the door at the top. After sneaking onto the second floor balcony that overlooked the entire floor, their suspicions were confirmed. The warehouse was empty. There was an office across from them but it was all glass and no one was in it. There were no other places that Steve could have been stashed unless he was being held in the bathroom. They agreed that seemed unlikely but stopped to double check before leaving the warehouse.

“It hasn’t been deserted for very long,” Catherine said, looking at the fresh tire tracks in the sand that had accumulated on the road.

“I wonder what was in here?” Chin asked as they went back toward Steve’s truck. “I’ll call CSU to come check it out.”

The next address was in one of the worst parts of town – run down, empty buildings with broken out windows, potholes in the streets. The address Danny had been given used to be a bakery but it hadn’t been in business for some time judging from the amount of fading that the sign had undergone.

“This is a waste of time,” Danny said in frustration as they were standing on the cracked and uneven sidewalk in front of the building.

“Come down here,” Catherine requested, standing at the open end of a littered alleyway. They carefully made their way down to the end of the building, discovering a small parking lot with six abandoned cars. They were rusted and busted up. Among their carcasses sat the Camaro, all bright and shiny as though it had been recently washed.

“No way are we touching it until it’s checked out,” Chin said as they slowly approached it.

“Could Steve be stashed in the trunk?” Catherine asked, standing close but not touching the car.

“If he were, he’d have ninjaed his way out,” Danny said before squatting next to it, visually checking under the engine. He didn’t see anything suspicious but he knew better than to touch it. “They coming to get it?” he asked when Chin was off the phone.

“They are. Once they determine whether or not it’s rigged, they’ll tow it back to the HPD garage.”
“Good,” Danny said with a nod.

“How long before they arrive?” Catherine asked.

“Ten minutes,” Chin said.

“We need to go to the last address,” Danny said urgently.

“The car might provide intel on where Steve was taken,” Catherine said.

“He wasn’t kidnapped in the Camaro,” Danny said. “It was…stolen yesterday.” He waved his hands in frustration, unable to fully explain. “Come on.”

“You sure it won’t help?” Catherine asked Chin quietly as they followed Danny back to the truck.

“It won’t help,” Chin confirmed, entering the driver’s side. “This last address is in the Shadow’s Dawn community. It’s gated and secure.”

“We’ve been told that it is so upscale that the houses don’t have street numbers,” Catherine said. “I know that must frustrate HPD.”

“It does,” Chin agreed.

“How do they get their mail?” Danny asked.

“PO Boxes at a central hub,” Chin said. “Houses start at $1.5 million. That’s their starting price.”

“Sounds like a good place to take someone to interrogate them,” Danny said in a clipped tone.

“Yeah,” Chin agreed. “My badge will get us through the community gate. We may have to resort to crashing the house gate.”

“I can assure you that Steve won’t mind a few additional scratches on his truck,” Danny said.

Chin took out his phone when it rang, putting it on speaker. “Hey Charlie. You find something?”

“A possible phone number,” Charlie said. “We can’t be sure it belongs to Wo Fat but we have reason to believe that it does.”

“Where is it right now?” Danny asked.

When Charlie told them, they weren’t too surprised to discover the address was the same as the one to which they were heading. “Thanks so much Charlie,” Chin said before hanging up.

“Seems to settle it,” Catherine said, checking her weapon to make sure it was fully loaded and ready.

“It does,” Danny said through clinched teeth. “Can you call for back-up? He could have an entire army inside.”

Chin got on his phone and requested that SWAT wait far enough away from the community gate that Wo Fat couldn’t be alerted to their presence. His phone rang as soon as he hung up, CSU
reporting that Danny’s car had been rigged with explosives and if they had touched it, they’d all have been killed.

“Covering his tracks,” Chin said.

“Did you get it diffused?” Danny asked the tech.

“They are working on it right now, sir. We’ll tow it in once it’s safe.”

“Thanks,” Danny agreed, turning back to look out the windshield. “How much longer?”

“Three minutes,” Chin said as he swerved around a slow moving bakery truck.

“Isn’t that the name of the bakery where we found the Camaro?” Catherine asked.

“Yeah,” Danny said, looking back to watch it. “Can you make any details?”

Catherine turned around in her seat, studying the truck. It looked like a standard issue bakery truck, square and white. Utterly unremarkable and being driven by a Hawaiian man wearing a black shirt and dark sunglasses. Catherine suggested to Chin that he might want to see if he could slow it down enough for a black and white to catch up and stop him.

Chin requested immediate assistance, giving dispatch their exact location. A marked police car was very close by and would be there in 90 seconds if traffic cooperated. Chin slowed enough to interfere with any possible speeding the truck might try to undertake, the road having turned from four lanes to two. Catherine said the driver looked frustrated but not particularly suspicious.

They were nearly to the turnoff for the community when the black and white approached from the opposite direction, the lights on, the siren blaring. The truck tried to make run for it but between Chin maneuvering Steve’s truck across both lanes of traffic and the squad car boxing him in, the bakery truck was effectively immobilized.

Guns drawn, the uniforms approached the truck, demanding the driver put both hands on the dashboard.

“Is there anyone else in the truck?” one of the officers demanded.

The driver looked down at him in contempt, refusing to answer. The officer jerked open the door, demanding that the driver leave the truck, his hands still in the air. He complied, remaining silent all the while.

Chin, Danny, and Catherine approached the truck, guns drawn. They checked inside, finding it empty except for two lengths of rope and two cinder blocks. Danny had no doubt what they were intended to be used for and was nearly sick in the back of the truck.

“We’re not too late,” Chin assured him, seeing the distress on Danny’s face.

“God, I hope not,” Danny said, leaving the truck. “Where were you taking this truck?” Danny demanded of the driver, standing in front on him and pointing gun directly at his head.

“None of your business haole,” the driver said with a sneer.
“No, it is my business,” Danny retorted, clocking him up-side the head with the butt on his gun.

“Hey. You can’t do that,” the driver protested, unable to stop the bleeding with his hands cuffed behind his back.

“Do you see a badge? No you don’t. Now – where were you going?” Danny asked, invading the man’s personal space.

“I ain’t talking to you. You got nothing on me,” the driver said in defiance.

“We’re wasting time,” Danny said to Chin and Catherine. “Let’s go.”

“Hold him on suspicion of kidnapping,” Chin said to the officers guarding the driver. “And have the truck towed to impound.”

“No, wait,” Danny said. “We can use the bakery truck to enter the gate.”

“Right,” Chin agreed.

“He looks enough like you that they might not notice,” Catherine said to Chin. “Do you have sunglasses?”

Chin took them out of his pocket, slipping them one.

“Good,” Catherine said.

“Here,” Danny said, handing Chin a black shirt that buttoned up the front. “It’s one of Steve’s. He keeps extras in the truck.” Chin pulled it on over his TAC vest, effectively hiding it from view.

“Is there a code for the gate?” Danny demanded of the driver.

“Fuck off. That’s the code,” the driver spat at him.

Danny looked like he might use the butt on his gun on him again but instead turned with Chin and Catherine to look up at the tall man in TAC gear who had just arrived in a huge truck with SWAT painted on the side.

“Captain Grover,” Chin said in greeting.

“What’s this then?” the Captain asked, looking at the bakery truck. “A new addition to HPD?”

Chin explained about Wo Fat and the bakery and why they stopped the truck. He also explained who Catherine was, Grover shaking her hand as well.

“Seems likely it isn’t a coincidence that this truck belonged to that bakery,” Grover had to agree. “I’ve never met Commander McGarrett but I’ve heard good things about him.”

“Right now I’d like to hear he’s been located,” Danny said, his tone abrupt and worried.

“You must be Danny Williams,” the Captain said. “I’m glad to finally meet you.”

“Really?” Danny said, looking up at him. “Why’s that?”
“Lieutenant Governor Denning recommended I look you up. As a fellow transplant. Getting used to Hawaii can be...a challenge.”

“Once we have Steve back, I’ll give you all the insight I have to offer,” Danny promised. “But now can we go get him?”

“Absolutely,” Grover agreed. “How you want to play this?”

Danny looked at Chin and Catherine. He should be able to answer but his head was spinning and there were waves of nausea rolling through his stomach. What if they were too late? What if Steve was dead? What if the cinder blocks were to weigh down his dead body? What if…?

“Danny,” Chin said firmly, a hand on Danny’s shoulder. “We’re going to get him back. Stay with us.”

“I’m here,” Danny said, taking a deep breath. “I’m good.”

“All right,” Chin said. “Grover will hold back here until we have the lay of the land. If there is any trouble, he’ll bring his squad in, barrels blazing.”

“Do you know what Steve looks like?” Danny asked the Captain who seemed so very tall. Danny had a crick in his neck looking up at him.

“I showed a picture to my guys. We’ll use extreme caution if we’re called in,” Grover assured him.

“Thank you,” Danny said, following Chin and Catherine into the bakery truck. Danny didn’t see anything that would indicate that Steve had already been inside it. He didn’t see any blood or damage from Steve kicking it. As sickening as it was, Danny knew it made sense to transport Steve in a baker truck. Those trucks wouldn’t raise any eyebrows almost anywhere on the island.

“Anything else?” Catherine asked, joining Danny in the back.

“Just the bricks and ropes,” Danny said.

“Anything to hold on to back there?” Chin asked, looking over his shoulder.

“Not really,” Danny said, looking over the empty truck walls. “It’s totally bare.”

“All right,” Chin said. “Sit on the floor and brace yourselves against the walls. If I have to crash the gates, that should protect you.”

“Did you give the keys to the Commander’s truck to one of the officers?” Catherine asked as she sat opposite from Danny.

“They’ll drive it to your house,” Chin told Danny.

“At least we know there aren’t any bombs on it,” Danny said.

“True that,” Chin agreed, starting the truck that coughed to life. “This truck’s seen better days.”

“May not make it to the end of today,” Danny said, bracing himself as well as he could when Chin
put the truck into motion.

“Do you suffer from seasickness?” Catherine asked him with a concerned frown.

“No,” Danny said. “Why?”

“You look a little green around the gills, as my grandmother would say.”

“That’s fear. Pure, unmitigated terror that we’re too late,” Danny admitted in a low voice.

“Steve’s a super SEAL, Danny. He knows you’re coming,” Chin assured him.

“God, I hope you’re right,” Danny said barely above a whisper.

“We’re coming to the community gate. Stay out of sight as much as you can,” Chin said. He turned the truck onto the immaculately landscaped street that led directly to the gate with its far too picturesque gate house. The security guard looked as though he wasn’t interested in who entered the community, and waved the truck through without Chin having to slow down. “Guess the truck is a regular sight,” Chin said when they were through.

“I’m surprised they allow commercial vehicles on their streets,” Catherine said.

“The people who live here probably have fresh bread delivered every morning so their personal chefs can make them toast,” Chin said.

“Freaks,” Danny observed.

“Yeah,” Chin had to agree. He checked his phone, the GPS guiding him around the perfect curves with the perfect houses along side the perfect driveways and perfectly tidy front yards. “I feel like I’ve entered another dimension.”

“It’s creepy,” Catherine agreed. “It’s more artificial than Barbie’s dream neighborhood.”

“I’m willing to bet every woman living here has more than a passing resemblance to Barbie,” Chin said.

“I wouldn’t be surprised,” Catherine said sadly.

“All right,” Chin said, slowing the truck. “It’s the next house. The Tudor with the two turrets.” He nodded toward it, Danny and Catherine raising up enough to see the house looming up over the security fence. “Hopefully whoever is monitoring the gate will think that I’m the jerk we left behind.”

“Here’s hoping,” Danny said, sitting back on the floor to wait.

Chin turned into the driveway, the section between the road and the gate large enough to accommodate the truck without blocking traffic. There were two cameras aimed directly at the driveway and a speaker box by the driver’s door.

As they waited breathlessly, the gate swung open by itself. The person watching the camera feed had to have known the truck was coming and had no reason to suspect its arrival was anything out of the ordinary.
“We’re through,” Chin said receiving an acknowledgement from Grover in his ear. “We’re driving up toward the house. There is a circular drive so we can leave without backing or turning around.”

They waited to see what was going to happen next. What they had not anticipated was two large Hawaiians dressed in all black to exit through the side door. The larger of the two had Steve slung over his shoulder, carrying him as easily as if he were a child.

Chin rolled his window down part way, enough to hear one of the men say “You’re late.”

“Traffic,” Chin responded, turning to look toward the back door of the truck.

Danny and Catherine had their guns drawn when one of the men got the door open. “We just want McGarrett,” Danny said in a low voice. “Hand him over and we drive away.”

The two men looked startled but knew facing three loaded guns aimed directly at their heads meant that surrendering their victim was in their best interest.

The man carrying Steve approached the open door, lowering him. Danny accepted Steve’s limp body and with Catherine’s help, pulled him further into the truck.

“Go, go, go,” Catherine said, reaching out to pull the door closed. They lay low in case any gunfire erupted, Danny covering as much of Steve as he could. Except for the low roar of the truck engine as Chin stepped on the gas, there was only blessed silence.

“Is he…?” Chin didn’t finish his question, glancing briefly back as he drove like the devil himself was on their heels.

“He’s alive,” Danny breathed, his finger on Steve’s neck to feel the reassuring pulse. He still had on the pale blue polo shirt he’d left wearing this morning except now it was streaked with blood. Danny was fairly certain that the blood was from Steve’s broken nose. Both his eyes were already turning black. His khaki shorts were filthy and torn in a couple of places around the hem just above his knees. He was barefoot, and there were rope burns around his ankles and his wrists.

“Damage?” Chin asked, clearing the gate. As soon as they were out onto the street, the SWAT van pulled into the drive, barging the gate. They would get a complete report of what happened later. For now, their focus was to get Steve to the closest hospital.

Danny reported all the injuries he could see, holding tight to Steve’s left hand. “Hold on, babe. We’re going to get you fixed up.”

“His arm is at a strange angle,” Catherine said, pointing to Steve’s right hand that seemed to be turned upside down in a way most human would find uncomfortable.

“He may have a broken collarbone,” Danny said, not touching Steve’s arm or chest. “What’s that?” he asked when he heard sirens advancing on them.

“A police escort,” Chin said. “They’re clearing traffic so we can get Steve to the hospital. Trauma unit’s on stand-by.”

“Thank you,” Danny said quietly.
Only a few minutes later, they were pulling into the emergency bays at the hospital, the black and white waiting by the side. The emergency room personnel pulled open the van doors and Steve was loaded with great care and greater urgency onto the stretcher. Danny knew he had to stay out of their way and as much as he wanted to go with them, he couldn’t. They had Steve. They would make sure he was taken care of.

Chapter End Notes

There will be a brief delay in posting the next chapter. I won't have time to write (unfortunately) until Tuesday or Wednesday of next week.

Thank you to everyone who has been reading and commenting on this story! I'll have the next chapter up just as soon as I can.
Chapter Summary

Steve begins down the road to recovery.

*Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same. ~Emily Brontë*

Danny, Chin, and Catherine went into the waiting area of the emergency room, not surprised to find Kono and Stan already there.

“How is he?” Kono asked as they hugged and introduced Catherine.

“He was beaten,” Danny said, fighting the waves of nausea as he said the words. “Probably so he’d tell them where Hiro Noshimuri is.”

“But he doesn’t know,” Kono said.

“They don’t know that,” Danny said.

“He’s going to be okay,” Chin said, sitting next to Danny. “You have to know that.”

Danny leaned forward, his elbows resting on his knees. “If he dies…”

“No,” Kono said, tears running down her cheeks. “You can’t think like that. He’s going to be fine. Just like Chin said.”

Danny took an unsteady breath and nodded. “Yeah. You’re right. He’s going to be fine.”

“Any word from Captain Grover?” Catherine asked Chin quietly.

“Not yet,” Chin said.

“Where’s the Ferrari?” Kono asked Danny as he was telling them about their search for Steve.

“Still at the marina,” Danny said. “We took Steve’s truck.”

“We’ll go get it,” Stan said, standing with Catherine.

“You don’t need to do that,” Danny said, looking up at them.

“Leaving it overnight is not a good idea,” Chin warned.

“And I need to get back to base,” Catherine said.

“You can take my car,” Kono said, handing her key to Stan. “We’ll have someone pick us up when we’re ready to leave.”
“How will you get home?” Danny asked Stan.

“I’ll drive the Ferrari to my house. You can pick it up when you have time. Or I’ll arrange to have it brought to you,” Stan assured him.

“He came with me so his car’s at his house,” Kono said.

“He came with you?” Danny repeated, confused by that.

“We were discussing the club,” Kono explained. “I was surfing not far from Stan’s and said I’d swing by for him.”

“I see,” Danny said, looking up at them. “Thanks.”

“Call me with Steve’s condition when you have a chance,” Stan requested.

“Of course,” he promised. He stood to get the Ferrari key out of his pocket, handing it to Stan. “Thank you for all your help,” he said to Catherine.

Catherine nodded as she left the hospital with Stan.

“So they just gave you Steve?” Kono asked. She was holding tight to Danny’s hand, Danny finding comfort in the contact.

“What did they have to lose?” Chin remarked. “We’d have shot them if they’d refused.”

“And you’re sure it was Wo Fat?” Kono asked.

“Not 100% but Grover was taking his SWAT team in as we were leaving. I’ll call him in the morning if I don’t hear from him,” Chin promised.

“Wow,” Kono said. “You’re guessing Wo Fat was looking for Noshimuri.”

“It’s the only thing that makes sense,” Chin agreed. “Why else take Steve?”

“Yeah,” Kono agreed, considering all that had occurred. “Wow.”

“You can say that again,” Danny said quietly.

They continued to chat about nothing in particular for what felt like forever. In reality, it was a little over three hours after they’d arrived that an Hawaiian doctor with graying hair and half glasses perched on the end of his nose came through the swinging doors to inquire about the family of Steve McGarrett.

“That’s us,” Danny said, immediately on his feet. “How is he? Is he going to be okay? Can I see him?”

“You must be Danny,” the doctor said kindly. “Steve asked about you.”

“Is he awake?” Danny asked.

“Intermittently,” the doctor said. “I’m Dr. Ho. Steve has a fractured right collarbone and wrist. His
nose was broken, as I’m sure you know. He has two black eyes, four cracked ribs, and a severely bruised kidney. It’s a good thing he’s as physically fit as he is. On someone less tough, these injuries would have been much, much worse.”

“So he’ll be okay?” Danny asked, needing to make absolutely certain.

“It will take some time but he will make a full recovery,” Dr. Ho assured them. “He’ll be released from the hospital once there is no more blood present in his urine.”

“Thank God,” Danny said, weak in relief.

“How long does that usually take?” Kono asked.

“Two to four days,” Dr. Ho said. “He’s heavily medicated but the nurse can show you to his room.”

They all nodded, thanking the doctor on Danny’s behalf. He didn’t seem able to talk coherently now that he knew Steve would recover. The nurse led them into the back and up two floors on the elevator before showing them the private room that housed Steve.

“Hey babe,” Danny said when they were standing beside Steve’s bed. His face was discolored and swollen, his right arm in a complicated sling that kept it immobilized close to his body. “The doctor says you’re going to be okay.”

“We were so worried,” Kono said, leaning closer to kiss Steve lightly on the forehead.

“Now that we know Steve’s out of danger, Kono and I are going to go. We’ll be here first thing in the morning,” Chin promised Danny.

“Thanks guys. Really. I couldn’t have handled this without you,” Danny said, hugging them in turn.

“Ohana, brah,” Kono said, kissing him on the cheek before following Chin out of the room.

“Oh babe,” Danny said, sitting on Steve’s left side, taking hold of his limp hand. There was an IV running into his vein, one Danny was sure included a heavy-duty painkiller. There was no way Steve could be sleeping so soundly if he weren’t drugged to the gills.

Danny could only gaze on the damaged face of the man that he loved. It didn’t matter if both his eyes were black and swollen shut. The new leftward bend his nose had acquired did nothing to make him less attractive. He was as beautiful to Danny as the day they had met – maybe even more so because now he looked at Steve through the eyes of love.

Danny let the exhaustion of the day take him to sleep. Having Steve back released the load he’d been carrying, giving him permission to ease himself away from the world.

“…don’t know….don’t….know…”

“It’s okay, babe. It’s me. I’m here and you’re safe,” Danny said when Steve’s hoarse voice woke him several hours later.

“….don’t….know….know….” Steve repeated, his head turning back and forth to emphasize his lack of knowledge of whatever was being demanded of him.
“Babe,” Danny said, putting his palm carefully on the least bruised part of Steve’s cheek. “Wake up for me. You’re having a bad dream.”

Steve stilled at the sound of Danny’s voice, finally managing to squint open one eye to try and focus his vision. “Danno?” he croaked.

“Yeah, babe. It’s me. You’re safe. You’re in the hospital.”

“Hospital,” Steve repeated, trying to take in his surroundings. But with one eye that was completely swollen closed and one that would barely open at all, it was hard to tell exactly where he was.

“Yeah. We got you away from the house and brought you to the hospital.”

“George?” Steve said.

“He’s fine. He was able to contact the Coast Guard. They rescued him. He told us what you said about golfing.”

Steve nodded unsteadily at that. “Not Wo Fat,” he whispered, letting his eye close.

“It wasn’t Wo Fat?” Danny asked, not sure if he could believe what Steve was saying. Did Steve even know what he was saying for sure?

Steve slowly shook his head. “Adam…Noshimuri.”

“Adam who, babe?” Danny asked, holding tighter to Steve’s hand in an attempt to ground him.

“Noshimuri. Wanted to know…about Hiro.”

“Adam Noshimuri,” Danny said in realization, wondering why he was so slow to catch on. He wasn’t the one who had been beaten.

“Yeah,” Steve said. “He’s pretty pissed.”

“I guess so. What are you going to do?” Danny asked in concern.

“Contact Hiro. He can’t do…this to family,” Steve said, his tongue tracing over his cracked lips.

“Here babe,” Danny said, giving him slivers of ice. “Which you’ve said all along. Can you reach Hiro?”

“Think so,” Steve said, considering it as he let the ice moisten his mouth.

“You thought it was Wo Fat, with what you told George. When I asked Tua for Wo Fat’s whereabouts, he gave me the address of the house where we found you.”

“Adam got Wo Fat’s help. Speed boat guys weren’t Tongan. Were Wo Fat’s.”

“How did you know?” Danny asked, giving him more ice.

“Wrong tats. Spoke Japanese but didn’t know I understood.”
“I see,” Danny said. “There were ropes and cinder blocks in the back of the truck.”

“What truck?” Steve asked with a tiny frown of confusion.

“The bakery truck we drove to get you out, which we stole from them. They were taking you away from the house to drown you.”

Steve carefully shook his head at that. “Adam wasn’t going to kill me. Was a warning. He let me go…. lead him to Hiro.”

“Oh,” Danny said. “I guess that makes a certain kind of sense. Did you tell Adam that Hiro isn’t dead?”

“Don’t think so?” Steve said, a frown of concentration between his eyebrows. “Things got…fuzzy.”

“I can imagine,” Danny said. “While we were waiting for the doctors to finish treating you, I was called by our two favorite men in black. I ignored their three phone messages. They’re insisting on talking to you tomorrow or the next day.”

“Call Sam,” Steve said,

“I already have. He’s going to call to tell them your doctor will decide when you can talk to them.”

“Kay,” Steve agreed. “I’m sorry.”

“You have no reason to be, babe. We got you back. You’re going to contact Hiro as soon as you can. And then no one will harass you about his whereabouts.”

“Hope not.”

“How was sailing with George?” Danny asked with a fond smile.

“Good,” Steve said. “Fun.”

“I’m glad. Now go back to sleep.”

“Home,” Steve said, looking up at Danny.

“You’ll be released when you are no longer peeing blood,” Danny said sternly.

“No,” Steve said. “You go home.”

“Nope,” Danny said. “I’m staying right here where I can keep an eye on you. Chin had a policeman stationed outside your door. No one is going to come for you in the hospital.”

“Can he do that?” Steve asked.

“According to Chin, a citizen of Hawaii is in danger. It would be irresponsible of the police not to ensure his safety.”

“Sam do it?” Steve guessed.
“Possibly. It’s not important. You recovering is important,” Danny told him.

“I’m peeing blood?” Steve asked.

“You have a severely bruised kidney,” Danny confirmed. “No doubt you can’t tell from all the other injuries they inflicted on you.”

“Yeah,” Steve said with a soft sigh.

“Go to sleep. I’ll be right here when you wake up,” Danny promised, kissing his forehead. He watched Steve continued to fight sleep until it finally won, his face relaxing into his slumber.

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“Danno?” Steve’s rough voice said, some concern evident.

“I’m right here,” Danny assured him, returning to the side of the bed where Steve could see him.

“Good,” Steve sighed.

“Do you know where you are?” Danny asked, sitting down and scooting his chair closer.

“Uh huh. Thirsty,” Steve said, trying to lick his lips.

“Where are you, babe?” Danny asked, shaking some ice chips into a cup and holding it carefully to Steve’s mouth.

“Shopping mall,” Steve said. But Danny could see the glint in his one working eye.

“You are such a smart ass,” Danny said, shaking his head.

“Who are you?” Steve joked, reaching under the rail of his bed to touch Danny.

“Nobody important,” Danny said, kissing his forehead. “Kono and Chin are here. Can they come and say hello?”

“Time is it?” Steve asked, squinting his one functioning eye toward the heavily shaded windows.

“A little after 10,” Danny said, giving him a sliver of ice. “In the morning.”

“Doctor been by?”

“He has. He said you are right where you should be in your recovery. They’re going to bring you liquids to see if you can keep them down,” Danny said.

“’Kay,” Steve agreed. “Kono and Chin are here?”

“Right outside. Is it okay for them to come in?”

“Uh huh,” Steve said with a shaky nod.

Kono and Chin entered with a huge bouquet of bright flowers and several cheerful balloons. They
put them with the other flowers that took up nearly every available surface. Apparently all of Oahu had heard about Steve being abducted and beaten and had sent flowers in response. At least that’s what it looked like from the flowers already in the room.

“It’s good to see you alive,” Chin said with a worried smile.

“You definitely lost this fight,” Kono joked, kissing Steve’s forehead and smoothing down his hair.


“We are ohana. You know there isn’t anything we wouldn’t do for you,” Chin reminded him.

“Same,” Steve said.

“What did Grover find in the house?” Danny asked Chin, aware of Steve listening to them.

“Three henchmen plus the two who gave us Steve. They are in a holding cell, hopefully to be charged with assault and kidnapping,” Chin said.

“No Wo Fat then,” Danny said.

“No. We think he may have been there. CSU is dusting for prints,” Chin said.

Danny nodded, glancing back at Steve whose head shake of ‘no’ was barely perceptible. “You’ll let us know?” Danny asked when he’d returned his focus to Chin.

“Of course,” Chin agreed.

Steve was trying to follow the conversation but it felt like too much trouble. When he attempted to participate, he fell asleep in the middle of a sentence.

Chin and Kono stayed only a few more minutes, Kono assuring Danny that she’d go to the house to accept delivery of the desks. Danny had gotten a text saying they’d be there between noon and three, if that was convenient. Once Kono agreed to wait for them, he texted the store with confirmation.

Chin and Kono hugged Danny, promising to come back around dinner. They insisted they’d be bringing him food and he would be eating it.

“Okay,” Danny said with a resigned sigh. “I promise I’ll eat it.”

“Good,” Kono said, kissing his cheek.

“Later,” Chin said after hugging Danny in reassurance.

Danny sat back by Steve, watching him sleep. There was still a slight hitch in his breathing which Dr. Ho told him was caused by the cracked ribs. There was very little they could do except wait for them to heal. He’d assured Danny that Steve would recover completely, given time. Danny believed the doctor but wished there was a magic wand he could wave over Steve to relieve him of all the pain he was still feeling even as he slept.

Deciding watching Steve sleep wouldn’t help either of them, Danny opened his laptop, assured by the nurses that he was free to use it without fear of interfering with any of the instruments monitoring
Steve’s condition.

When Danny went to his email, he found at least two dozen messages asking about Steve’s condition. He responded first to the one George had sent, assuring him once again that he was not to blame for what happened to Steve and that Steve would make a full recovery. George wrote that he was thinking of stopping by the hospital the next day if Danny thought that would be all right. Danny replied it would be fine although he might want to wait for Danny to call so he’d have a better chance of seeing Steve when he was awake.

There was one email he nearly deleted as spam until he looked closer. It was from an anonymous email server, no IP address, no way to reply to it. The subject line was in Japanese and when Danny input it into Google-translate, it read “My Apologies.”

The body of the email was short and in English:

_Tell SM I am most regretful._

_HN_

Danny would have liked to reply, to tell Hiro what he thought of everything Steve had been through. But even if Danny could have written to Hiro, he probably wouldn’t have done so. He understood the man’s motivation. Didn’t make Danny any less angry about what Steve had been through but he did understand.

Shortly after reading the email from Hiro, Danny received an electronic notification from his bank, informing him that the one million dollars had been wired successfully to his account. Danny wondered why he was just now getting the notification when the money had been in his account since before Steve kidnapped Hiro. Upon going to his bank account, he discovered the latest million was in addition to the money Hiro had already given him. Danny also checked Steve’s account, not finding any additional anonymous wire transfers. Well, Hiro certainly knew how to apologize with flair.

Danny briefly considered going downtown and buying Steve a matching Ferrari, maybe in black. But he decided against it. If Steve wanted a Ferrari, they’d get him one. Or any other car he might have ever wished to drive. Having three million in their accounts was going to make starting the club that much easier. While he had the time, he called Stan to discuss with him the wisdom of paying cash versus financing the property.

“Naturally there are pluses and minuses,” Stan said after inquiring about Steve’s condition. “If you pay cash, you’ll decrease your available start-up capital. If you use financing, the money will be there if you hit lean times.”

“Yeah,” Danny said, considering it. “If it were you, what would you do?”

Stan was quick to answer, as though he had considered the question already. “Finance at least half. Keep the money in reserve.”

“That does make sense,” Danny had to agree. “I’ll talk to Steve as soon as he’s coherent.”

“You know there’s no rush. I have the appraisals. Do you want me to courier them to you?”

“No. I’ll wait until Steve is released. How do they look?” Danny asked.
“Excellent. He is asking less than the appraisal which is to your benefit,” Stan said.

“We figured he was,” Danny said. After discussing a few other details, Danny promised to keep Stan posted on Steve’s condition.

“Thanks,” Stan agreed, hanging up.

After disconnecting, Danny discovered he had a text from Sam:

Call when convenient

Double-checking that Steve still slept soundly, Danny dialed Sam’s private number. “Hi,” Danny said when Sam picked up right away.

“Well, from the way you sound, Steve must be doing better,” Sam said.

“He was awake for a little while. The doctor said he will make a full recovery,” Danny said.

“That is excellent news. In not so excellent news, you should be hearing from the IRS very soon,” Sam told him.

“Yeah, I figured. Are we obligated to tell them where the money is from?” Danny asked.

“You don’t know. It’s anonymous. You will have to pay the taxes on it. And they may ask you some probing questions about your loyalty to the U. S. of A.,” Sam said.

“Steve’s SEAL status will surely help,” Danny said.

“It won’t hurt. They can trace all of his movements in the service although the Navy won’t be happy about providing that intel. Have you been out of the country recently?”

“Never. I don’t even have a passport,” Danny said.

“Good,” Sam said. “Keep it that way at least for now.”

“I will,” Danny said. “Thanks for the head’s up.”

“I have a friend in the banking industry. He thought I should know.”

“This friend,” Danny said with a smile. “He wouldn’t be one Michael Pinehall, would he?”

“Possibly,” Sam laughed. “He would have called you directly but was worried about Steve. I said I’d let you know.”

“Appreciate it,” Danny said, disconnecting after their farewells.

“preciate what?” Steve asked, squinting with one eye over at Danny, his eyebrows furrowed.

“That was Sam. The IRS will be making inquiries concerning our sudden windfall.”

“Oh,” Steve said. “Was inevitable.”
“Sam said they’ll wonder if we have ties to unfriendly international interests. They’ll subpoena your Naval records if they are really worried. The fact that I’ve never left the country should prevent me from being labeled a terrorist sympathizer.”

“Never?” Steve asked.

“No I’ve never been abroad. Not even to England. I always planned to but…”

“’m sorry,” Steve said.

“No need. It’s part of my life,” Danny said. “I got an email from Hiro. He said he’s sorry.”

“Uhn,” Steve grunted.

“Yeah. I appreciate the sentiment but I appreciate the extra million he transferred to my account even more.”

“Seriously?” Steve asked.

“Seriously. I called Stan. He said we should still finance at least 50% of the club. Keep the cash in reserve.”

“Makes sense,” Steve said.

“I need to tell the nurses you’re awake,” Danny said with a quick kiss.

“’kay,” Steve agreed, watching him leave the room. He wondered how he had gotten so lucky, that he and Danny had found each other. It must have been fate. He could find no other explanation for the union of their souls. And he had no doubt that that was what they shared – a real and abiding completion. Wait, he thought, his brain still muffled with pain. Does that make sense?

There wasn’t time for him to decide on an answer when Danny returned with a nurse in tow.

“Now is a good time for you to go have some lunch,” the petite woman with dark brown hair said warmly to Danny. “Give us half an hour.”

Danny nodded, leaning down to kiss Steve very gently. “Be a good boy and I’ll be back soon.”

“Stay outta trouble,” Steve responded, watching Danny leave before focusing on the nurse waiting patiently.

“Hello, dear. My name is Lola,” she said as she busied herself with checking Steve over.

“Hi Lola,” Steve said, looking up at her and her kind eyes that were watching him.

“You’re a very lucky man,” Lola said. “Except for the injuries, I mean.”

“I am. I understood,” Steve assured her.

“Do you know what day it is?”
“Saturday. Around noon?” Steve guessed.

“Yes it is,” Lola agreed. “Are you and your handsome young man married?”

“No,” Steve said. “Not yet.”

“Not yet,” she repeated, looking at him with a smile. “Have one of you asked?”

“No. Just timing,” Steve said. This was a weird conversation to be having with someone other than Danny. And the idea of marriage had never actually come up. Steve thought it was inevitable at any rate. Because they hadn’t discussed it didn’t mean it wasn’t what they both wanted. Right? He was pretty sure that was true. The pain made those thoughts scurry frantically around in his head, threatening to make him dizzy.

“Are you?” Lola asked, holding his wrist and counting his pulse.

“Am I what?” Steve asked. He’d missed her question completely.

“Still in a lot of pain,” she said, checking the IV line taped securely onto his left arm.

“Mmm…I guess?”

“I know you are trained to power through, dear. But fighting the pain slows the healing. If you need more pain medication, you only have to ask. The doctor left orders to provide it to you whenever you felt the need.”

“Makes me sleep,” Steve said.

“I know. But right now, that helps you heal. I’m going to bring you some water to drink and a small cup of jello. Once you’re done, I’ll give you the pain medication and you can sleep as you heal. All right?”

“Okay. Still peeing blood?” he asked as she changed out the collection receptacle.

“Far less than you were,” she said. “I’m going to raise the head of your bed. Let me know if it hurts your ribs.”

He waited as she pressed the mechanism to lift the top of his bed, the movement causing his ribs to twitch in pain but it seemed to make breathing less of a chore.

“How’s that?” Lola asked when she was satisfied.

“Easier to breathe,” he said.

“Then we’ll leave it up if you can sleep,” she said. “I’ll be back in just a few minutes.”

“I’ll be here,” he said, smiling when she laughed. He was sure she’d heard that a hundred times before but her reaction felt genuine. He smiled even more when Danny returned, a familiar cup of coffee in his hand.

“What has you smiling so?” Danny asked with a coffee-flavored kiss.
“You’re back,” Steve said, looking up at him. “You eat?”

“I did. I asked Lola if you could have something other than jello. You aren’t the first patient with an aversion to it.”

“I’ll eat it, if I have to,” Steve said. It was true. He really didn’t like jello but understood why it was all that was currently on his menu. When jello had come up the first time with them, he’d tried to explain to Danny why he hated it so much only to realize he had no idea.

“Hey SEAL boy,” Danny said, sounding worried. “You with me?”

“Yeah. Thinking about jello,” Steve admitted. “Not important.”

“All right,” Danny said. “Lola said that you are showing an amazing rate of improvement. Not that I’m surprised. Since you excel at everything you set your mind to.”

“I can’t decide to heal fast,” Steve said, enjoying Danny’s laugh. “I can’t.”

“I’ll let you believe you’re a regular person if that’s what you want,” Danny said. “I know the truth.”

“Stop,” Steve said, shaking his head slowly. “I have one eye working.”

“For now,” Danny said.

“Thanks for not telling about Adam,” Steve said, accepting the cup with ice with his left hand. He was so thirsty, he didn’t think there was enough ice or water in the world to quench it.

“I figured you didn’t want them to know. What will you do if they figure out it was him?” Danny asked.

Steve shrugged with his left shoulder, careful not to move his fractured right clavicle any more than possible.

“How did they break your collarbone?” Danny asked.

“It’s the third fracture,” Steve said, flinching when he moved the wrong way. “First was on a mission. Didn’t heal right. Makes it vulnerable.”

“Can you have it pinned? Reinforce it some how?” Danny asked.

“I may. Depends on how bad the break is,” Steve said. He had considered having a reinforcing plate put in the second time it had been fractured but had decided against it. The doctor said it could interfere with his range of motion. In someone with a less active lifestyle, the fracture was unlikely to reoccur. But with Steve, it seemed almost inevitable.

“I get that,” Danny agreed, watching as the nurse returned with a frosty bottle of water and a cup of cream colored shaved ice.

“Pineapple shaved ice,” she announced, putting it on Steve’s try. “I hate jello too.”

“Thank you,” Steve said, awkwardly scooping up some of the ice with the spoon in his left hand. “Mmm….”
“You can have as much as you want,” she assured him. “We also have cherry, coconut, and lime.”

“Thanks,” Steve said, eyeing the water bottle. It was still sealed and there wasn’t any way he could get it open.

“Here babe,” Danny said, taking off the top and handing him the bottle.

Steve drank from it as slowly as he could. He really wanted to gulp it down but knew that would cause unfortunate consequences. He had absolutely no desire to have the water come back up when he wasn’t able to leave the bed.

He finally felt like the water got rid of some of the sandpaper in his mouth so he could focus on shaved ice. Danny was having an animated conversation with the nurse, making her laugh. Steve could hear that they were talking but he couldn’t focus on the words. He was too busy trying not to dive head first into the shaved ice and swim his way out. That’s how good it was to him.

“The doctor will be by this afternoon,” Danny told him after Lola had left.

“Okay,” Steve agreed, eating more of the shaved ice that was currently the most important thing in his life.

“You have no idea what I just said, do you?” Danny asked, wiping up some of the ice from Steve’s chin.

“Doctor. Later,” Steve said, swatting away Danny’s hand. “Stop. I’m not four.”

“You look like you are,” Danny said. Steve could see the amused affection on his face and especially in his beautiful blue eyes.

“You need to go home tonight,” Steve said. He understood why Danny wanted to stay but those blue eyes were surrounded by lines of worry and exhaustion.

“If you promise to behave, I will,” Danny said, surprising Steve. He’d thought there would be an argument about whether or not he would be staying.

“Just like that?”

“You’re feeling better. There’s almost no blood in your urine. The doctor will probably give you enough pain killers to knock out an elephant,” Danny said.

“Probably,” Steve agreed, drinking the last of the syrup from the shaved ice bowl. He was trying to decide if he wanted another one when Danny asked him the same question.

“Another one?” Danny said with a relieved smile.

“Don’t know,” Steve admitted, drinking more water.

“I’ll ask Lola for another one,” Danny decided for him. “If you don’t eat it all, it won’t matter.”

“’kay,” Steve agreed, watching him leave. He knew he didn’t have to stare over at the door until Danny returned but having him out of his sight was…more difficult than he wanted to admit. He
really did want Danny to go home to sleep and knew it was for the best. Steve would survive without Danny. He’d survived this long without a Danny in his world. One night would be… possible, he scolded himself.

“Cherry,” Danny announced, placing the new shaved ice on Steve’s tray.

“Mmm…” Steve said, enjoying this bowl almost as much as the first one. Ordinarily he’d object to the artificial coloring that made the cherry so very red. But it tasted so good, he didn’t really care what was in it.

“I guess it’s good,” Danny teased.

Steve smiled at him, offering him the spoon. Danny tried the ice, nodding.

“It is good,” Danny agreed. “Finish it so you can take a nap.”

Steve sighed at that. “I hate being sick.”

“I know, babe,” Danny assured him. “It’s rare and unusual.”

“Those mean the same,” Steve said, succeeding in launching Danny on a rant about SEALs and vocabulary and stubborn jackasses. A good Danny-rant was just the balm Steve needed to fall back asleep, half of his cherry ice uneaten, the spoon halfway to his mouth.
Guns More Than Food

Chapter Summary

Steve receives several visitors as he continues to recover.

*When the Japanese mend broken objects, they aggrandize the damage by filling the cracks with gold. They believe that when something’s suffered damage and has a history it becomes more beautiful.* ~Barbara Bloom

Steve was discharged from the hospital on Monday, with a minimum of badgering from the patient. Dr. Ho agreed to release Steve to Danny’s custody after receiving his reassurances that Danny would watch out for Steve.

Once Steve had on his cargos, with liberal assistance from Danny, and one of his looser shirts buttoned up over his sling, he stepped into his slippahs, ready to escape before Dr. Ho could change his mind.

“In your custody,” Steve scoffed as Danny drove them home in the Camaro. It had been returned to Danny after it had been processed and all explosives had been successfully removed.

“What?” Danny said when Steve frowned at him.

“Don’t you have any smart remark about that?” Steve asked, sounding slightly disappointed.

“Babe, I was so worried when I couldn’t find you, it’s all I can do to even consider letting you out of my sight.”

“Oh,” Steve said.

“Yeah,” Danny replied.

“I’m really sorry.”

“You don’t need to be,” Danny said. “I can’t duck tape you in bubble wrap as much as I want to. You are who you are. I wouldn’t love you the way I do if you weren’t that person.”

“That person?” Steve repeated.

“You know what I mean,” Danny said, shaking his head at Steve’s supposed innocence. “Do you want a Ferrari?”

“Where did that question come from?”

Danny shrugged, smiling over at him. “Only seems fair. Or a Porsche? I’d prefer that, not convertible. Then the women couldn’t eye-hump you when you drive it.”

“Like you aren’t the target of an equal amount of eye-humping,” Steve said.
“A – that’s not true. And B – that’s not the point. Do you want a Porsche?”

“No,” Steve said. “We already have a Ferrari. That’s enough horsepower for the both of us.”

“All right. If you change your mind, we’ll get you one too,” Danny said, pulling into their driveway. Already parked there was Kono’s car and Chin’s motorcycle.

“Kono and Chin are here?” Steve asked as he waited for Danny to come around to his side of the car. He was pretty sure he could make it to the front door without help but having Danny next to him was a necessary precaution. His right eye remained swollen nearly shut and his vision wasn’t always reliable, especially his depth perception. The doctor assured him that those two results of the beating would clear up.

“Yeah,” Danny said. “Chin is making us lunch. Kono is taking over Oahu.”

“Taking over Oahu,” Steve repeated.

“She called Trent from Stanton Street. They had dinner last night, and from what Chin told me, breakfast this morning.”

“Huh,” Steve said as he and Danny carefully navigated their way up the walk.

“Trent is going to work for the Club. He will talk to the rest of the staff about also deserting the Stanton Street ship.”

“The Stantons are going to be really pissed at us,” Steve said, going inside the house when the door magically opened. He was immediately engulfed in a careful hug, Kono kissing his cheek.

“Brah,” she said, passing him over to Chin to hug.

“You look horrible,” Chin informed him, going with him over to the couch where Steve settled on it.

“Thanks?” Steve said, looking up at them. His heart was filled with the security of family that they represented to him, grateful beyond words. He automatically accepted a tall glass of water from Danny, making himself drink it slowly. “What’s new?”

“Trent said yes,” Kono said in delight, sitting by him.

“I went to the office building this morning,” Chin said. “It’s perfect for your short term needs.”

“You sign the lease?” Steve asked.

“I’m not involved, officially,” Chin reminded him.

“I told you to come aboard,” Kono said, looking up at him.

“No cuz. I’ll stay a cop,” Chin said.

“I’ll sign the lease tomorrow,” Danny said. “Then we can start interviewing potential employees.”

“Isn’t it too early?” Steve asked. “We don’t even own the house yet.”
“August 1 is only six weeks away,” Kono reminded him. “Oh, and Jonathan said we should have a Halloween party. A masquerade ball. It will be good advertisement, let people see the Club before it officially opens, tempt them to join.”

Steve looked over at Danny who shrugged. “What do you think?”

“I don’t care,” Danny said. “I see the point.”

“It’ll be fun,” Kono said, her enthusiasm lighting her face even more than usual. “We can turn the house into a vampire lair. Or really whore it up like an old-time bordello.”

Danny could only shake his head at that. “If you want to plan a Halloween party, go right ahead.”

“Thanks,” Kono said happily.

“You’ll need a corporate credit card,” Danny said. “Once we’re a corporation.”

“That makes sense. In the meantime, I’ll put you on my American Express account,” Steve said. “For official purchases only,” Steve felt the need to add when Kono giggled with a little too much excitement.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Kono said with a supposedly innocent shrug.

“When did Sam say we’d have the incorporation papers?” Steve asked Danny.

“Another week at least,” Danny said.

“I looked on-line for china, since Danny has some weird aversion to it,” Kono said, laughing at his expression. “I found some really nice sets that are white, squarish, and can have the logo imprinted, once we have one.”

“They have all the matching parts?” Danny asked. “Cups? Glasses?”

“Yes,” Kono agreed. “I’ll show Steve later.”

“I’ll be glad to look at them when both eyes are working correctly,” he agreed, smiling up at Danny’s frown. “They’ll be a surprise for you. You don’t have to have anything to do with them.”

Danny shrugged, sitting on the couch when Chin announced he needed to return to the kitchen to finish lunch preparations. Kono went with him to lend a hand. “Do you need to take a nap?” Danny asked Steve, studying him and seeing the lines of exhaustion around his mouth.

“I’ll sleep after we eat,” Steve promised.

“All right,” Danny agreed, kissing his head. He took out his phone when it rang, answering to talk to Sam. “Hi.”

“How’s Steve?”

“We’re home. I think the hospital asked that he be thrown out,” Danny joked, making Steve frown at him.
“Wouldn’t be surprised. Do you want a police presence at the house?”

“No thanks. We both have guns. We’ll be fine,” Danny said.

“Very well,” Sam said. “The FBI is getting more and more insistent. Can Steve talk to them tomorrow?”

“Hold on a second. Here,” Danny said, giving his phone to Steve so Sam could repeat the question.

“What time?” Steve asked in resignation of the inevitability of the FBI questioning him.

“I’ve cleared my schedule from 2:00 to 4:00,” Sam said.

“All right,” Steve agreed. “If you can come at 2:00, they can come at 2:30.”

“I’ll let them know,” Sam agreed before hanging up.

“I’m sorry, babe,” Danny said.

“Sorry for what?” Chin asked as he and Kono returned to the living with trays crammed full of food.

Danny explained, Chin and Kono also expressing their sympathy at the upcoming interview. “Having Sam here will help,” Chin reminded them.

“Yeah,” Danny agreed, looking over the top of his glass at Steve. He was staring down at the food as though he wasn’t sure what it was for. “Are you not hungry?”

“Huh?” Steve asked, focusing on Danny with some difficulty.

“You’ve barely eaten,” Danny pointed out. “Aren’t you hungry?”

“I thought I was,” Steve said, looking up at Chin in apology. “I’m more tired than I realized.”

“No worries,” Chin said, taking his plate.

“Come on, SEAL boy. It’s bed for you,” Danny said, standing and holding out a hand to Steve. He reluctantly took it, trailing up the stairs behind Danny.

“I can get in bed by myself,” Steve said as Danny continued to pull him toward the bedroom.

“You can’t get undressed by yourself. I’ll help you then go back down,” Danny said undoing his cargos so they could fall to the floor. He also unbuttoned Steve’s shirt, putting it in the hamper. By the time he was out of the bathroom and in their bedroom, Steve was in bed, looking over at him. “What, babe?” he asked as he gave Steve a pain pill he only reluctantly accepted.

“Can you stay? For just a minute?” Steve asked after swallowing down the hated medication. He didn’t like how needy he sounded in his request but knew having Danny with him would make it easier to sleep. And after the dreams he’d had the last few nights, he was going to need help to relax. The pain pill would also help although he hoped he soon could stop taking them. Maybe once it didn’t hurt to breathe. Mostly they were twinges in his side but every breath reminded him of the beating he’d received.
“Of course,” Danny said, kicking off his shoes and removing his jeans.

“You need to tell Chin and Kono.”

“They’ll know when I don’t come down right away,” Danny assured him, getting into bed and kissing his forehead. “Close both eyes and go to sleep.”

“Uhn,” Steve grunted. He groaned when the doorbell rang through the house, flinging his left arm over his eyes.

“Ignore it. The cousins will deal with whoever it is,” Danny assured him. It was only a couple minutes later that a soft knock sounded on their door. “Yeah?”

The door swung open to allow Kono to enter part way. “Someone claiming to be Adam Noshimuri is downstairs,” she said with a frown.

“Adam Noshimuri,” Danny repeated, sitting bolt upright. Steve didn’t move but Danny could feel the tension in his body. “Is he alone?”

“Yes. He said he wants one minute of Steve’s time,” Kono said. “He sounds…worried? Upset maybe?”

“Babe?” Danny said, looking down at Steve who was trying to focus on Danny. The anxiety of the unexpected visitor combined with the swelling still present in both eyes made focusing far more difficult than he liked.

“Bring him up. Ask Chin to come up too,” Steve finally requested, slowly sliding up the headboard. He reached over with his left hand into the back of his nightstand drawer, taking out the gun he always kept there. He put it under the covers, hidden but within very easy reach. He doubted Adam would try anything. That didn’t mean he was prepared to face him without as much back-up, both human and ballistic, as possible.

It didn’t take long for Kono to return, followed by an attractive Asian man, and by Chin who was frowning unhappy.

“What do you want?” Danny demanded as soon as Adam entered their bedroom. Steve was tense and coiled for action, Chin a menacing presence on Steve’s side of the bed, Kono with Danny.

“I came to apologize,” Adam said. He sounded sincere and like he had some making up to do.

“I understand your actions for what they were,” Adam continued. “A kindness for someone to whom
“you owed no debt.”

“I understand your actions in response,” Steve said. “When I make a promise, I keep it.”

“As I now realize,” Adam said.

“If I were in your shoes, I can’t say my reaction would have been different,” Steve said with complete honesty. What wouldn’t he sacrifice if it meant he could talk to his father one more time?

Adam met his eyes, holding them. “Thank you,” Adam said. “I have taken enough of your time.”

“I hope you’ll come again soon. We’ll have dinner and talk,” Steve said in invitation.

“I’d like that, providing it endangers none of us,” Adam said.

“I think that’s up to you,” Steve suggested.

“Most probably,” Adam agreed, turning to leave.

“Adam,” Steve said, stopping him from exiting. “The FBI is coming tomorrow. I will tell them the same thing I told your henchmen.”

“Thank you, again,” Adam said with a final nod.

“I’ll walk you out,” Kono said, leaving with him.

“Well,” Chin said.


“I understood his need to know,” Steve said. “I’m glad Hiro called him.”

“You’re sure it was Hiro?” Chin asked.

“I guess it doesn’t matter,” Steve decided. “Adam knows the truth. It will make our lives easier.”

“That’s for damn sure,” Danny agreed. “Only the FBI to deal with then it should be done.”

“They don’t waterboard civilians, right?” Kono asked when she was back with them.

“No,” Steve assured her. “They can’t tie any of us to his disappearance. It’s purely speculation on their part.”

“Except they have witnesses who saw you stash Hiro in the trunk,” Chin reminded him.

“Like I told them before, I’m not the first to demand at gunpoint that he go with me. They won’t find a body.”

“Since there isn’t one,” Kono agreed. “Come on, cuz. Let’s spend some of Steve’s bloodless money.”

“You’ve created a monster,” Chin whispered dramatically as he followed Kono out. Even after he
shut the door, they could hear Kono’s retort: “I heard that.”

Steve scooted back down in the bed, rolling onto his left side. “Here. Put this somewhere safe,” he requested, handing Danny the gun. Danny smiled ruefully before putting it in the nightstand drawer on his side.

“You sure know how to win friends and influence people,” Danny said, reaching over to lightly kiss him.

“I could give seminars,” Steve agreed, enjoying the sound of Danny’s laughter.

“We’ll make plans as soon as you wake up,” Danny promised.

“When can we have sex?” Steve asked innocently. The doctors may have told him but he wasn’t entirely sure. And if they had, he couldn’t remember what the answer had been.

“You’re a romantic besides,” Danny said, laughing again. “They said as soon as it doesn’t hurt, you are free to resume most normal activities. You can’t swim for four more weeks. And Dr. Ho would really like to talk to you about putting in a plate.”

“I guess I should this time,” Steve conceded, hating that his body refused to completely heal his collarbone. But then with the amount of abuse it’d gotten over the years, he supposed it was to be expected.

“He said it’s relatively simple. It won’t interfere with any motion of your right arm.”

“Last time I discussed it, they said I might not be able to lift my arm over my head,” Steve said.

“That was several years ago, babe. Technology has advanced. The plates are smaller and stronger.”

“That’s good to know,” Steve said with a yawn he couldn’t stop.

“Go to sleep,” Danny said with another kiss.

“’kay,” Steve sighed, doing as instructed.

The next 24 hours were a blur to Steve. He spent all of it in bed, most of it asleep. He tried to fight the weight of exhaustion but there was nothing he could do to make his body leave the bed except to visit the bathroom.

Every time he surfaced from the haze of sleep, Danny was right next to him – sometimes sleeping, sometimes talking, sometimes on his laptop. But he was there.

Steve vaguely remembered eating something but wasn’t sure what it was or when that had been. As he woke up to the sun streaming full force into their bedroom, he knew from the gnawing emptiness of his stomach that it had been a while since he last ate. “I’m really hungry,” he said to Danny, looking up at him where he sat against the headboard.

“Good morning to you too,” Danny teased, kissing him lightly.

“What time is it?” Steve asked, looking toward the windows. Mid-day if he had to guess.
“It’s just before noon,” Danny said. “I was going to wake you up soon. You need to take a shower and eat before Sam gets here.”

“Right,” Steve said, slowly sitting. The room didn’t tilt this time, the floor right where it should have been. It didn’t feel nearly as much like he had lead weights tied to his ankles when Danny helped him over to the bathroom. “Do you have the plastic for my cast?”

“Right here,” Danny assured him, helping him out of his boxers. As Steve waited, Danny released the sling so he could very carefully remove it. Steve tried not to flinch as the movement jolted his collarbone, knowing it had to come off for him to take a shower. “I know it’s sore,” Danny said in a soothing tone. “We’ll put it back on as soon as you’re done.”

“I’m okay,” Steve lied, his voice sounding strained to his own ears. He knew he wasn’t fooling Danny but he really wanted this shower. He’d withstand the pain long enough to get clean.

Danny undressed and helped him wash, quickly shampooing his hair. As soon as it was clean, Danny turned off the water and helped him out to sit on the closed lid of the toilet. All this assistance would have annoyed Steve if he had any choice but to accept. Thank God for Danny. He didn’t know what he would have done if it weren’t for him.

“What are you think so hard about?” Danny asked, kissing the furrow between Steve’s eyebrows.

“How impossible all this would be if it weren’t for you,” Steve admitted, getting Danny’s sunny smile in reward.

“That’s what I’m here for,” Danny said. “Come on. Let’s get you dressed and fed.”

“Sounds good,” Steve agreed, following Danny back into their bedroom. Danny helped Steve pull on fresh briefs and cargos, getting one of Steve’s buttoned shirts out of the closet. “This one won’t fit over my sling,” Steve said.

“We’ll leave it unbuttoned,” Danny said. “So the FBI can see the evidence of your lack of cooperation with whoever took you.”

“Ahhh,” Steve said. “Play the sympathy card.”

“Precisely,” Danny agreed as he pulled on his jeans and a tee shirt.

“What does the FBI want, anyway? To find Hiro? To arrest me? What?” Steve asked as he stepped in his slippahs. He’d given those questions a lot of thought and still wasn’t any closer to the answers.

“I asked Sam that,” Danny said as they went downstairs. They could hear Kono in the dining room, talking to someone. They continued on to the kitchen, Steve leaning against the cabinets.

“What’d Sam say?” Steve asked, accepting a bottle of water from Danny.

“He made some discreet inquiries. The FBI thinks Hiro was the main player in all underworld activities on the islands. With him gone, they want to know who is taking over.”

“Then why come to me?” Steve asked, confused by their reasoning, if they had any. “He didn’t leave the reins in my hands.”
“If they can find Hiro, they can find out who’s in charge now,” Danny said. “What do you want to eat?”

“Waffles,” Steve said without hesitation. He’d been dreaming about them and really wanted that dream to come true.

“I hear that,” Kono said as she came in the kitchen. “We have fresh strawberries and bacon.”

“Have you moved in here?” Steve asked her with a smile.

“If I have?” she said, full of sass and high spirits as always. That was one of the things that Steve enjoyed most about her company.

“You must be sleeping on the couch,” Steve said.

She laughed and shrugged. “I was talking to your friend Grant,” she said as she made coffee for them all. “He will have logo prototypes to show us by the end of this week.”

“Thank you,” Danny said. “How much are we paying him?”

“Pffft,” she said, waving it away.

“That’s not really an answer,” Steve said, trying for stern. But he knew his barely suppressed laughter gave him away.

“It’s on the spreadsheet. You gave me a range. He’ll come in under it,” she assured them both with her dimpled smile.

“Did you quit your job?” Steve asked, watching Danny prepare the waffle batter.

“Dude,” she said.

“That means yes?” Steve asked.

“Two weeks ago,” Danny said. “You were too busy being beaten to notice.”

“I guess so,” Steve said. “And we’re paying you?”

“Not yet. I’m not worried. You’ll pay me once the papers go through,” Kono said. “I called Kelly Orwell like you asked me. She said she’d be glad to be the club’s accountant, not full-time though.”

“Do we need her full time?” Danny asked Steve.

“With payroll and income and payments due, I’d think we would,” Steve said.

“We can use Kelly until we’re almost ready to open,” Danny said. “We’ll hire someone full time then.”

“That makes sense,” Steve agreed, accepting a cup of coffee from Kono. “Have you talked to Jonathan?”

“Every day. Several times a day,” Kono agreed with a laugh. “He likes his new computer.”
“Thanks for getting it to him,” Danny said.

“You were a little busy,” she replied, smiling up at Steve.

“Have you heard from the Stantons?” Steve asked.

Danny and Kono traded a look that answered that question.

“Oh,” Steve said, not sure he wanted to know exactly what happened.

“They threatened to sue us,” Danny said as he put the bacon in the microwave. “Sam said they have no grounds. Trent was never given a contract. Almost all of the most popular recipes are his. If Trent chooses to accept other employment, there is nothing they can do about it.”

“Excellent,” Steve said. “I’m sorry they yelled at you.”

“Not yelled so much as threatened,” Kono said. “I think they know we’ll put them out of business.”

“That’s what I thought too,” Danny said.

“Jonathan and I found a company to supply aqua blue polo shirts and khaki pants,” Kono said. “They’ll embroider the logo on the shirts with a four day turn-around.”

“That’s excellent timing,” Danny said. “They’re local, I take it.”

“The company might be owned by one of my cousins?” Kono said, Steve and Danny laughing at her.

“What on these islands isn’t owned by one or more of your cousins?” Danny asked.

“We really did shop around. They have good prices and they are fast,” Kono assured them.

“We trust you, babe,” Danny said. “We need to meet with Trent and George so we can discuss renovations to the kitchen.”

“We need a conference table for the offices,” Kono said.

“The offices,” Danny repeated. “I’m supposed to sign the lease today.”

“What time?” Steve asked.

“1:30,” Danny said, looking at the time. “I’ll call and tell them I’ll come tomorrow.”

“That’s for the best,” Kono agreed. “Do you want me to leave before the FBI comes?”

“No,” Steve said. “You stay right here.”

“Okay,” she said with a nod. She took over the waffles when Danny pulled out his phone to call about the offices. He arranged to sign the leases the next day, the building owner understanding the need for the delay.
“When can we start advertising for personnel?” Kono asked.

“Another three weeks,” Danny said. “We can’t hire them too soon. We won’t have anything for them to do until the house is renovated.”

“Yeah,” Kono agreed. “I wish you had the house already.”

“So do we, kid,” Danny agreed.

“Can we have George and Trent over to discuss the renovations?” Steve asked as Danny piled several waffles on a plate for Kono to carry into the dining room.

“Trent has Thursdays off,” Kono said when she heard the question.

“I’ll call George if you’ll call Trent,” Steve said to her.

“After you eat,” Danny said, steering them both into the dining room. The bacon, strawberries, and whipped cream were all ready and waiting for them to eat.

“Once the FBI leaves, I’m going to catch some waves,” Kono said as she stuffed what looked like an entire waffle in her mouth.

“Sounds like fun,” Steve said wistfully.

“You’ll be able to surf in six weeks,” Danny reminded him.

“Not if I have the plate put in,” Steve said.

“In your clavicle?” Kono asked, reaching over for another waffle.

“Yeah. Dr. Ho said it will stabilize it. Make it less susceptible to breaks,” Steve said.

“Makes sense. I knew a guy on the circuit who had one put in. He said it was excellent,” Kono said.

“That’s good to know,” Danny said. “You want more coffee?”

Steve looked in his cup before nodding. “Yes please.”

“Madame?” Danny asked Kono with a laugh.

“Yes please,” she parroted, making Steve laugh at her. “Jonathan suggested that the Halloween party should be famous couples. Romeo and Juliet. Napoleon and Josephine. You know….”

“What about people who are single?” Steve asked, considering it. “And how will you decorate for couples?”

“Oh,” Kono said with a frown. “Jonathan and I are both single. I wonder why he suggested that.”

“Because he wants to go as half of your couple,” Danny told her when he returned with the coffee.

“Never mind then,” she said, waving the idea out of the air. “I like him but not like that.”
“The party should be able to show off the Club,” Danny said. “We’ll decorate but not so much that it obscures all that the Club has to offer.”

“Hmmm…” Kono said. “That’s a good point. A haunted mansion would be counter to our best interests.”

“What if we make it a luau and everyone has to dress native?” Steve suggested.

“That’s an excellent idea,” Kono agreed. “I’m sure Trent can cook a pig in a pit. And since you want native arts and artisans represented, that will be perfect.”

“It’s settled then,” Danny said. “You have cousins who can DJ a Halloween bash?”

“You know it,” she said. “I’ll add the party to the spreadsheet.”

“Will you go native?” Steve asked Danny with a leer.

“Stop,” Danny said, trying to swat him away. “Just stop.”

“You two are too cute for words,” Kono declared. “Way too cute.”

“You already have the job, Kalakaua. What are you up to now?” Danny asked in suspicion.

“The Ferrari keys,” she said brightly. “I haven’t gotten to drive it yet.”

Danny sighed dramatically before taking them out of his pocket. “Please try not to wreck it.”

“I promise,” she said, kissing his cheek. “I’ll just go for a quick spin before the FBI arrives.” And with that, she was gone, her giggles trailing behind her as she left out the front door.

“Alone at last,” Danny said, leaning closer to kiss Steve. “I feel like it’s been forever since we’ve had quality alone time.”

“It does feel that way,” Steve agreed. “Let’s tell everyone we’re unavailable this weekend. It’ll be just us.”

“I like the way you think, sailor,” Danny agreed. “Do you want another waffle?”

“One more,” Steve decided, spearing it from the platter and dousing it with a generous portion of strawberries and whipped cream.

“Do you need a pain pill?” Danny asked as he watched Steve consume the last waffle.

“Probably. But I’d rather wait until after the FBI leaves. They can make me loose lipped. And you know what that does.”

“Sinks ships,” Danny said. “I’m going to call Trent. You’ll call George?”

Steve nodded, doing just that. George was happy to hear from Steve and agreed to come to dinner Thursday night. Even if Trent wasn’t available, it would give George a welcome opportunity to see for himself that Steve was well on his way to recovery.
Danny asked Trent if he was available to which he agreed. Thursday night would be fine and Trent promised to provide dinner at their house. “That isn’t necessary,” Danny protested.

“It will be my privilege,” Trent said.

“If you’re sure. We aren’t world-renowned chefs but we can grill a steak with the best of them,” Danny said, making Trent laugh.

“I’m sure you can. Let’s call it my audition if you like,” Trent said.

“I’m convinced,” Danny said. “How’s 6:30?”

“Perfect,” Trent said.

Danny gave him the address before hanging up with additional thanks. “It’s set then.”

“I’ll call Jonathan and Stan,” Steve decided. “It’s a good idea for them to be here too.”

“Excellent,” Danny agreed, clearing up the plates and cleaning the kitchen as Steve talked to Jonathan then Stan.

“Very good,” Steve said. “We’ll see you then.”

“Now Chin,” Danny said. “And that will be everyone.”

Steve nodded, calling Chin and inviting him to the dinner. Chin asked if it would be all right if he brought a date which Steve assured him would be fine. “Chin has a girlfriend?”

“This is the first I’ve heard of it,” Danny said with a shrug. “We’ll grill Kono when she gets back.”

“I am back,” she said with a bright smile.

“You didn’t stay out very long,” Danny remarked.

“I was afraid I’d steal it and never bring it back,” Kono admitted with a laugh. “What were you going to ask me?”

They explained about Thursday, that everyone had said they would come and that Chin had asked to bring a date. “What are you holding out on us?” Danny asked her.

“Do you remember seeing Dr. Waincroft when you were in the hospital?” Kono asked them.

“I think I do,” Danny said. “Pretty, curly hair, beautiful eyes.”

“That’s Malia. She and Chin stated dating in high school and got engaged while they were in college. But then they broke up. We all thought they were it. We never did find out what happened. He ran into her while he was visiting you and they started talking,” Kono said.

“You don’t seem too happy about it,” Steve remarked.

“It broke Chin’s heart. He wouldn’t say why they broke it off but I know he wouldn’t have called off their engagement. If she breaks his heart again…,” Kono said.
“You can’t protect him,” Danny said in sympathy.

“I know,” Kono said. “I like her but I worry too.”

“It’s natural,” Steve said, going to the front door when the bell rang. He moved aside to let Sam in.

“You look like death warmed over,” Sam announced as he studied Steve.

“You should have seen me before I started to recover,” Steve said turning to Kono. “I think you’ve met Kono Kalakaua.”

“We have,” Sam said, accepting her handshake. “Nice to see you again.”

“You too,” Kono said.

“Have a seat,” Steve invited, sitting in the recliner as Sam sat on the couch. Danny and Kono took two of the other chairs in the living room.

“How are you feeling, really?” Sam asked Steve, studying him with a critical eye.

“Better,” Steve assured him. “Both eyes open now. I’ve mostly slept since I got home. My fingers move which the doctor said to watch out for.”

“Your ribs?” Sam asked.

“Still sore,” Danny informed him.

“There’s nothing that will help but time,” Steve reminded them all.

“I know,” Danny sighed. “Can I get you something to drink?”

“I’ll have some water,” Sam requested.

“Kono?” Danny asked.

“Water’s fine. I’ll help,” she said, following Danny into the kitchen.

“I think I can hold four bottles by myself. So what’s wrong?” Danny asked when they were standing by the refrigerator.

“Steve. He’s not as fine as he wants us to believe,” Kono said softly. “I mean, I know you know that. But…”

“I know, babe. He won’t admit it. He told me he’d take a pain pill after the FBI finishes with us.”

“When does he see Dr. Ho again?” she asked.

“Next Wednesday unless we need to go sooner. But he’s not peeing blood and he is sleeping. You saw how many waffles he ate.”

“Yeah,” she said with a nod. “Okay. I’ll try to stop worrying.”
“No, kid. If you see something you need me to know, I want you to promise to tell me. I don’t always see it.”

“You’re too busy eye-humping him,” she said with a hip bump.

Danny shrugged, leading her back into the living room to distribute the waters.

“You believe Adam’s overtures of friendship?” Sam asked when Danny and Kono were sitting back down.

“He seemed sincere,” Danny said. “Didn’t you think so?”

“I did,” Kono said. “He seems to genuinely regret Steve’s injuries.”

“That is good news,” Sam said. “Don’t bring it up to the FBI. Don’t deny it if they ask directly. But you know not to volunteer any information.”

“Right,” Danny agreed. “The email Hiro sent me was untraceable. I called Charlie at HPD to double-check. He couldn’t tell where it originated from.”

“They may have advanced tracking abilities but Hiro could have had someone send it on his behalf,” Sam said. “Even if they find its origin point, it won’t guarantee Hiro will be there.”

“Anything on the house where we found Steve?” Danny asked.

“It’s owned by a shell corporation. They can probably find who owns it but it’s hardly worth our time,” Sam said. “And you got the address from Tua?”

“I did,” Danny agreed. “He gave me three possibilities. The house, the warehouse on Sand Island, and the deserted bakery where we found my Camaro.”

“Was the Camaro dusted for prints?” Steve asked.

“It was,” Sam said. “They didn’t find any. Not even yours. The bomb was crude but effective. It was homemade. Even the FBI will have trouble tracing who built it.”

“What exactly does the FBI want from me?” Steve asked, a question on all their minds.

“To find Hiro,” Sam said.

“Why?” Danny asked. “If he’s out of the business, why do they want to find him so badly?”

“From what I’ve been able to learn, they think Wo Fat took over the reins. He’s a ruthless son-of-a-bitch. They hope by finding Hiro they can undermine Wo Fat’s authority,” Sam said.

“Why not spend their time looking for Wo Fat?” Kono said. “Chin said Wo Fat is increasing the illegal drug-trafficking on the islands. He’s the one they need to stop.”

“If they find Hiro, they think that will solve two problems at once,” Sam suggested.

“I have no idea where Hiro is,” Steve said. “I believe he’s still alive but that’s all that I know.”
“I know this is difficult,” Sam said catching each of their eyes in turn. “My two best pieces of advice are to stay calm and don’t volunteer any information.”

“Right,” Kono said. “Will they think it’s weird that I’m here?”

“It doesn’t matter,” Sam said. “Steve isn’t under arrest. He isn’t going to be under arrest. They have no proof that he harmed Hiro.”

“I took him at gunpoint,” Steve pointed out.

“As you’ve said, you aren’t the first to use a gun to encourage him to accompany you,” Sam said.

“There is that,” Steve agreed.

“Are we ready?” Sam asked when the doorbell chimed.

They all nodded, letting Sam answer the door. “Yes?” he said as though he weren’t expecting the FBI on the other side. He hadn’t been expecting three agents but he didn’t let that show on his face.

“Lieutenant Governor,” the one in front said in surprise.

“Right now, I am a lawyer,” Sam said, opening the door only a little wider. “May I see your credentials?”

Each of the men pulled out their badges, Branch Miller and Van Norman accompanied by Special Agent Kent Malone. After Sam had examined each of their badges carefully, he moved aside to allow them to enter.

The three men looked at Kono and Danny before returning their strangely blank stares to Sam. “These uninvolved parties are excused,” Special Agent Malone informed Sam.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Danny said, standing next to Steve.

“Neither am I,” Kono said firmly.

“And you are?” Malone asked, looking her up and down, making a threat assessment. He had no way of knowing she was much tougher than her slim frame would suggest.

“Kono,” she said. “I’m Danny’s sister.”

“His sister,” Malone repeated, looking at her determined frown.

She returned his stare, refusing to back down.

“This is highly irregular,” Agent Norman said, his tone hard and verging on angry.

“As is having three FBI agents arrive to talk to a citizen who has committed no crime,” Sam pointed out.

“We don’t know that Mr. McGarrett is…”

“Commander McGarrett is suspected of abducting Hiro Noshimuri,” Agent Malone interjected before the Norman and Sam could come to blows. From their expressions, that was not far off.

“You have no physical evidence,” Sam said.

“We have witnesses,” Malone countered.

“Commander McGarrett requested Noshimuri accompany him. You have no proof that they weren’t leaving for a lunch meeting,” Sam said.

“He used a gun and put Hiro in the trunk,” Agent Norman said. “No one has ever invited me out to lunch at gunpoint.”

“He’s asked me at gunpoint,” Danny said. “Steve likes guns even more than food.”

“Were all of your guns legally obtained and fully registered?” Malone asked Steve, staring down at him.

“Of course they are,” Sam answered for him. “He’s a veteran. I know very few veterans who don’t own several guns. All of his paperwork is in order.”

“Perhaps we’ll double-check on those permits. Be a shame if any of them were expired,” Malone said.

“If they are expired, you’ll find the dates were illegally altered,” Sam said.

“Why are you taking such an interest, Lieutenant Governor?” Agent Miller asked in a tone intended to restore some calm to the situation. “Surely you have more pressing matters which require your attention.”

“I am still a lawyer, Agent Miller,” Sam told him. “Who I choose to represent is none of the FBI’s business.”

“Be a shame if the newspapers learned that the Lieutenant Governor and presumptive winner of the next gubernatorial election is representing a prostitute against charges of kidnapping,” Agent Malone said in a tone that was supposedly conversational.

“Steve did not kidnap anyone. And there is no evidence that Steve is now or ever has been engaged in illegal activities of any sort,” Sam said. His voice was hard, his body even harder. He looked ready to punch the next person who called Steve a whore.

“We have several witnesses who will testify to purchasing sexual favors from Commander McGarrett,” Agent Malone said, sounding like he was playing the trump card.

“Then arrest them for soliciting. As the saying goes, it takes two to tango,” Sam said.

“We’re not interested in them,” Malone said.

“Why are you here?” Steve asked, speaking for the first time. “What are you really after?”
The three agents turned to look down at him, some surprise on their faces as though they’d forgotten he was in the room.

“Who beat you?” Agent Miller finally asked in a solicitous tone.

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “They wore masks.”

“How many were there?” Miller asked, still studying Steve.


“Why did they take you?” Miller asked.

“You’d have to ask them,” Steve said.

“Did they ask you any questions? Make any demands of you?” Norman asked, not sounding nearly as concerned about Steve’s well-being as Miller had.

“They spoke Japanese,” Steve said. It was all he was willing to say.

“Did you understand what they said to you?” Malone asked, not sidetracked by the new information.

“Most of it I didn’t,” Steve said.

“And the parts that you did understand. What were they saying?” Malone asked, crossing his arms over his chest to stare down at Steve.

“Where is he?” Steve said.


“They never said. ‘Where is he?’ is all I understood,” Steve said.

“What did you say in response?” Norman demanded.

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “I said ‘I don’t know who you are asking about.’ I’m not sure they understood English.”

Malone took a small notepad out of his pocket, flipping several pages, looking at his notes before returning his frown on Steve. “A Mr…Deering said that the men who took you from his boat spoke flawless English.”

“They did,” Steve agreed. “They tied me up and blindfolded me after I was forcefully removed from George’s boat. I was put in a truck and driven away from the docks. A second set of men interrogated me. They didn’t speak to me in English.”

“Why continue to beat you if you didn’t understand their questions?” Malone asked.

“I was told HPD arrested the men when I was rescued. I suggest you ask them these questions,” Steve said.

“HPD interrogated them prior to informing us?” Norman asked, turning his angry glare toward Sam.
“They tried to interrogate them. By the time HPD found someone fluent in Japanese to translate, their lawyers arrived and instructed them not to answer any questions,” Sam said.

“Who were they working for?” Malone demanded of Steve.

“I don’t know. They didn’t introduce themselves to me. They beat me and yelled ‘where is he?’ And that was the whole of our interactions,” Steve said.

“What are the extent of your injuries?” Norman asked Steve, looking down at him like he was a specimen under a microscope.

“What reason do you have for wanting to know?” Sam asked. “You can see for yourself he was beaten. His full medical records are not germane to this discussion.”

“Maybe his injuries are self-inflicted,” Malone said.

“Self-inflicted,” Sam repeated. His incredulity at the idiocy of the suggestion was written large in his expression and his tone.

“That’s ridiculous,” Danny said with a hard, ugly laugh. “He was peeing blood for three days. Trust me when I tell you from experience that no man would hurt himself in such a way that there would be proof of that.”

“I’d expect you to cover for him,” Norman said to Danny.

“If there was anything to cover, I would,” Danny said. “But he didn’t do this to himself. You’re an idiot if you think he did.”

“Mr. Williams is a former policeman,” Miller interjected. “He would know if the injuries were self-inflicted. It’s clear they are not.”

“Former policeman,” Norman repeated.

“Mr. Williams is not suspected of any wrong-doing,” Sam pointed out. “His past profession is not the subject of this discussion.”

“Are you willing to testify under oath that you have no knowledge of who took you or why?” Malone finally asked Steve, a note of concession in his voice.

“Yes,” Steve agreed.

“And you will also testify that you did not abduct Hiro Noshimuri?” Malone added.

“Yes,” Steve repeated.

“Where is Noshimuri now?” Norman asked Steve.

“I have no idea,” Steve said.

“An additional million dollars was wired to Mr. Williams’ bank account shortly after your abduction. Are you telling me the money is unrelated to your abduction?” Malone asked.
“The money is from an anonymous benefactor,” Danny said.

“Of course it is,” Malone said, his words dripping with sarcasm.

“It was wired anonymously. Neither Danny nor Steve have any idea who sent it. They only know it’s someone who wants them to be successful in starting their new club,” Sam told them firmly.

“Amazing how you interact with the Noshimuri family and money mysteriously appears in your accounts,” Norman said.

Steve and Danny stared back at him, not admitting or conceding to anything. The FBI wouldn’t be able to trace the money and they weren’t going to admit where it came from.

“We’re done here,” Sam said, walking to the door and opening it. “You have no proof of any laws being broken. Because my clients have done nothing illegal.”

“We’ll be in touch,” Malone said as he waited for Miller and Norman to leave. “And we’ll be keeping an eye on your ‘innocent’ clients.”

“Gentlemen,” Sam said, closing the door when they were all out of the house.

There was a collective sigh of relief when Sam returned to the center of the room. “Well done,” he said to them.

“Do you think that’s it, finally?” Danny asked. “We can’t help them find whatever or whoever it is they’re looking for.”

“I think they realize that now,” Sam said. “Did you understand what they were saying? The guys who had you?” Sam asked Steve.

“I understood some of it. My Japanese is pretty rusty,” Steve said honestly.

“Do you think the FBI doesn’t know Adam exists?” Kono asked. “I’d have asked about him.”

“They may not know,” Sam agreed. “I thought it would be one of their first questions.”

“Was the house where we found Steve dusted for prints?” Danny asked, his police training requiring him to ask.

“They found prints from the thugs,” Sam said. “They found a set they couldn’t readily identify. Those may be Adam’s.”

“What about Wo Fat?” Steve asked.

“No,” Sam said. “Was he there?”

“No,” Steve said. “I had the feeling the thugs were hired by him but it was only a feeling.”

“I got the address from Tua when I asked about Wo Fat,” Danny reminded them.

“Do you think Wo Fat and Adam Noshimuri are in league?” Sam asked, concern about the
possibility evident.

“No, I really don’t,” Steve said. “Adam has…standards. His men were ordered not to kill me. Wo Fat would not have been so generous.”

“I’ve heard,” Sam confirmed. “I need to get back to my office. Call if you need me.”

“Thank you,” Danny said, walking him to the door and stepping right outside with him. It wasn’t long before he returned inside. “Come on, SEAL-boy. You need to take a nap.”

“Don’t spend all of our bloodless money when you get done surfing,” Steve said to Kono as he followed Danny up the steps.

“Most of it?” she called, her laughter floating up the stairs to them.
Chapter Summary

The stakeholders of Club 445 meet and make decisions, both small and large.

Chapter Notes

I apologize for the overly long delay in this update. A family crisis took precedence over my desire to write. Turns out when I'm emotionally and physically drained, the words don't want to come.

Now that my life has settled back down, I hope to write more and often!!!

Thank you for your patience.

*When an illness knocks you on your ass, you should stay and relax for a while before trying to get back up.* ~Terri Guillemets

“Should we get that?” Steve asked, too comfortable to even turn his head at the question.

“Isn’t that why we have Kono?” Danny responded, not opening his eyes.

“No, no. Don’t bother answering the door,” Kono called out as she went through the living room.

“You need to earn your keep,” Danny called back, making Kono snort at him. They could hear her talking to whoever had arrived. Their dinner guests weren’t due until 6:30 and although Danny didn’t know precisely what time it was, he was pretty sure it wasn’t that late.

“Hey guys,” Kono said from the backdoor. “Trent’s here.”

“Ahhh,” Danny said, standing up to turn around and greet him. Steve turned in his chair, his body stiffening as he stared up at their new cook.

“Trent, this is Danny and Steve,” Kono said, looking from Steve to Trent and back. “But you apparently already know Steve?”

“We’ve met,” Steve said, still staring up at him. Trent had the same surprised expression on his face as Steve did.

“We have,” Trent agreed. He was a native Hawaiian, about the same height as Danny with short cropped black hair. There was a blush under his tan, his brown eyes wide as he looked down at Steve.
“We…uhm… well,” Steve said, not finding the exact words he needed. He hoped he would eventually be able to discuss his former relationships with his former clients without stumbling over the words. It was inevitable that he would be running into them, especially once they began joining the Club. Steve was relieved when Danny stepped in to break the uncomfortable silence surrounding them.

“Got it,” Danny said with a decisive nod. “Good to meet you.” He extended his hand to Trent who firmly grasped it with his own.

“Good to see you again,” Steve said, finally finding his voice.

“I’d say the same but you look like you’ve been through a rough patch,” Trent said.

“Losing side of the fight,” Steve had to agree.

“Sorry to hear that,” Trent said, the mood lighter. “I brought everything required to prepare dinner. I just need the use of your grill.”

“Of course,” Danny said, leading him over to the gas one that had been cleaned and readied for Trent.

“You’re still expecting about 10 guests?” Trent asked.

“We are,” Danny agreed.

“Excellent,” Trent said. “I’ll make myself at home in your kitchen if you don’t mind.”

“Not at all,” Danny assured him. “Kono knows where everything is.”

“I do,” Kono agreed, leading Trent back into the house.

Danny sat back by Steve, looking over at him as Steve studiously looked out over the ocean. “So…” Danny said, a distinct note of teasing in his tone. “You and Trent.”

Steve glanced over at Danny, his face carefully blank. “I knew him as Keith.”

“Ahh…” Danny said in understanding. “And you were Freddie.”

“Uh huh,” Steve agreed flatly.

“Babe,” Danny said, reaching over to put a warm hand on Steve’s left arm. “Why are you embarrassed?”

“I have no idea,” Steve admitted. “It’s ridiculous.”

“Yeah it is,” Danny said with a smile. “Was he a regular?”

“No,” Steve said. “I saw him three or four times.”

“Okay,” Danny said, turning back to gaze out over the ocean.
“I’m sorry,” Steve said.

“For what?”

“I… I have no idea,” Steve confessed. “I guess this is the first former client we’ve encountered that you didn’t already know?”

“It’s going to happen. Our club is going to be filled with people one or both of us had as clients. We wouldn’t have met if we hadn’t been in that particular line of work.”

“I know,” Steve sighed. “I know I have no reason to feel like this.”

“I totally get it,” Danny said.

“I’m glad,” Steve said. “Thank you.”

Danny laughed, smiling at Steve with a look of pure fondness. “You are a goof. Do you know that?”

“You may have mentioned it a time or two,” Steve said, leaning closer to kiss him lightly. They broke apart at the sounds of someone clearing their throat.

“We can come back if now’s not a good time,” Chin said with a laugh. The very pretty woman with her hand through his elbow looked delighted and amused in equal parts.

“No, now’s fine,” Danny assured them, standing to greet them properly. He gave Malia a light kiss on the cheek, accepting the beautiful flowers she had brought with them.

“Those are very nice,” Steve said, looking up at them.

“They are from my garden,” she said.

“Malia is a genius with plants,” Chin remarked as they accepted Steve’s invitation to have a seat as Danny took the flowers inside to put on the table.

“How are you doing?” Malia asked Steve, assessing him with a doctor’s eye.

“Much better,” Steve assured her and Chin. “I’m sleeping and my appetite has returned full force.”

“Excellent,” Malia said.

“I can barely keep enough food in the house,” Danny said as he sat back by Steve. “Thank goodness Kono has been staying with us. I let her drive the Ferrari and she’ll go to the grocery store as many times as I need her to.”

“You going to buy her one?” Chin laughed. “She really likes yours.”

“As I’ve noticed,” Danny agreed. “Maybe when the club makes its first million.”

“I heard that,” Kono said as she crossed the living room to open the door.

“No promises, Kalakaua,” Danny yelled back at her.
“Uh huh,” Kono said, leading George and Jonathan into the backyard. She disappeared back into the house after showing them the lanai.

“It is beautiful out here,” George said, looking out over the ocean.

“Amazing,” Jonathan agreed. “You, not so great.”

“This is better,” Steve assured him.

“It is,” George confirmed. “He looked like death warmed over right after it happened.”

“You know who did it?” Jonathan asked with a frown marring his handsome face.

“No,” Steve said. “They were Japanese.”

“What can I get you to drink?” Danny asked deciding that was not a discussion they needed to have. Being asked about it by the FBI was bad enough. They did not want to resort to lies or half-truths with their friends.

Once he had everyone’s drink requests, he went into the house to fulfill them. Before he reached the kitchen, he detoured by the front door to answer the bell, finding Stan on the other side. “Howzit,” Danny said with a smile up at him.

“Danno,” Stan said. They embraced in a quick bro-hug before Danny escorted him to the kitchen. Kono introduced Trent to Stan, the men shaking hands and agreeing it was good to meet. Leaving them to talk, Danny prepared the drinks and returned outside to pass them around.

“You can have alcohol next week,” Danny reminded Steve when he frowned at his water.

“Yeah,” Steve agreed, shrugging.

“Are you still taking your pain medication?” Malia asked casually. She sounded like friend rather than a doctor as she asked.

“Yes,” Steve said.

“No,” Danny said at the exact same time.

“Steve,” Malia said with a shake of her head. “It’s not a weakness to help your body heal.”

“You have to know it’s to your benefit,” Jonathan agreed, looking like someone who knew all too well how much pain relievers could help.

“We could change the subject,” Steve suggested, making the others laugh.

“All right,” Danny agreed, looking back at the door when Stan and Trent emerged. Danny made the introductions that hadn’t yet been made, George and Trent saying how glad they were to finally meet.

“I’ve looked over the blueprints,” George was saying where he stood just next to Trent as he put the shish kabobs on the hot grill. “There’s room for expansion as well as space for quite a bit of renovation.”
“I’d like some expansion,” Trent agreed, describing the changes he could see being made. George took some notes, suggesting they look over the blueprints together after they’d eaten.

“These are the five logo versions he provided,” Kono said when all the delicious food was consumed. She passed out the sheets on which she had printed the logos Grant had sent. He had told her that they should be considered drafts and any changes that needed to be made could be easily incorporated.

Steve, Danny, and Kono had previewed the logos, arguing about which one was most suitable. Danny and Kono liked the one that Four-Four-Five spelled out in words. Steve favored the one that used the numbers to make the sails of a boat. They had pointed out that the Club would mostly be on dry land and the sailboat might convey the wrong impression.

Two of the logos they had decided weren’t to their liking but had agreed to show all five to everyone else. As they were all stakeholders, though not yet shareholders, it should be a group decision.

The two logos Steve, Danny, and Kono disliked were discarded almost right away. Trent said he liked one of them well enough but was willing to let it go. It wasn’t his favorite of the bunch.

Malia claimed she didn’t get a say but the others insisted. Chin Ho wasn’t an official part of the Club but they couldn’t imagine not getting his input. That gave Malia a vote as well.

The group did some friendly arguing about which logo would best represent the club, which would best translate to being embroidered on polo shirts, and which would make the best signs.

“Can Grant incorporate the sailboat but make it less prominent?” Stan asked, studying the two that were the finalists.

“That’s an excellent compromise,” George agreed. “Since you’ll have a boat, making it part of the logo makes sense.”

“I’ll talk to Grant tomorrow,” Kono decided.

“We need to meet on a regular basis,” Steve said thoughtfully. “At the very least until we open.”

“That’s an excellent idea,” Danny agreed. “We’ll have a myriad of decisions to make. Meeting once a week will give us time to work through them.”

There was a discussion about who was available and who was not. Turned out Thursday night was a good time for meetings, most of their schedules clear. Those who had conflicts would try to reschedule or would catch up when they could.

“There’s no reason for me to come,” Stan said when Kono asked about his schedule.

“Of course there is,” Danny said. “You are a stakeholder. And who other than us stands to lose the most if it fails?”

Stan laughed at his question. “Well, you have a point. You’ll lose my money too.”

“Precisely,” Danny said. “It’s settled then. Thursday nights, here, at 6:00. Trent, you are not expected to cook every week.”
“You have to know I don’t mind,” Trent pointed out. “I didn’t become a chef because I don’t enjoy cooking.”

“There is that,” Danny said.

“What does being stakeholders mean, exactly?” Kono asked, a look of consideration on her face.

“Hmm…” Danny said, glancing over at Steve. “It means a vote on most of the major decisions. It means…being like a board of directors. We aren’t a corporation so we don’t have a board. But if you are willing to serve as ours, unofficially, we’ll feel more secure in our decisions.”

“Eventually we want to share our profits,” Steve said. “We haven’t figured out how that will work yet. But we want to make you and all of our employees stakeholders.”

That announcement brought with it an excited discussion about how to make the profit-sharing work, who would be eligible, how long it would take for employees to become vested, how many slices the club-pie could accommodate.

“We really do need a full time accountant,” Steve said as the discussion swirled around their heads.

“My sister is a CPA,” George said. “Do you want me to have her call you?”

“Does she have a job currently?” Danny asked.

“She stopped working when she had her twins. They’re four now and she’d like to return to work. Her husband works mainly from home.”

“Sounds perfect,” Steve said. “She can bring them to work when she needs coverage.”

“I’ll give her your number,” George said.

“How about a day-care on site?” Stan said, considering the words as he said them.

“Huh,” Danny said. “It’s not a bad idea. Except we said we weren’t going to have anyone under 18 on the property.”

“Right,” Steve agreed. “But…”

“If we hire single parents, it would be a real perk,” Kono pointed out.

“We could run it as a co-op,” Steve said, looking over at Danny.

“A co-op,” Danny repeated.

“That’s an excellent plan,” Stan said. “Sweat equity so they don’t have to pay and they have a stake in it. And locate it away from the club. I’m sure you can find a place with room for a playground.”

“There is that,” Steve agreed.

“Will we allow people not working for us to enroll their children?” Danny asked. “It would help pay for it.”
"I don’t think that’s a concern, is it?” Kono said with a laugh.

“Well, you know,” Steve said. “It’d be nice if we had income from all sources possible.”

“How many people will the day-care need to employ?” Chin asked.

“It depends on the ages and the number of children,” Stan said. “We built one for a client and they had to make sure the heights were right for the bathrooms, that the square footage was adequate, that there was an appropriate child-to-teacher ratio.”

“We can hire a full time cook and have them teach the kids about good nutrition,” Trent suggested. That idea was met with very positive reaction.

“Do you want us to look for suitable properties tomorrow?” Kono volunteered, looking over at Jonathan to include him in her tentative plan. He nodded in silent agreement. There was a chance he’d agree to almost anything she suggested but none of those who were aware of that mentioned it.

“That would be great,” Danny agreed. “The club can buy it once we have the papers.”

“And it can be renovated without much trouble,” George assured them with smile.

“Lucky for us,” Steve said.

“If we have all the information for the proposed day-care, we can vote next Thursday,” Danny said. “Malia, you can give Chin your proxy if you can’t come.”

“Right,” Malia agreed with a secret smile just for Chin.

“When will you start all the hiring in earnest?” George asked.

“Another month,” Steve said to Danny’s nods. “We’d like to hire as many veterans as we can.”

“We’ve put the word out at Hickam-Pearl,” Danny added. “We think we’ll have quite a few candidates.”

“I’m spreading the word as well,” Jonathan said.

“We’ll hire college students as valets, life guards, other part time positions,” Steve said.

“How many employees will you end up with, do you think?” Malia asked.

“We honestly have no idea,” Danny admitted. “Trent, how many do you need in the kitchen?”

Trent considered that before stating he’d need a total of seven or eight, more for special events. “We’ll also need at least two pastry chefs. And if the dining room seats 100, we’ll need a minimum of six servers. Seven would be even better. Plus a maitre d’ or hostess and wine stewards.”

“The servers we’ll need right away. The wine stewards can wait,” Danny said.

“Do you know who you want in the kitchen with you?” Kono asked.
“Three of the best chefs are leaving Stanton Street to come here. I’ll need three more fully trained ones. I’m willing to take on two interns, one for each meal service. We can assign one to the day care as well.”

“That’s very generous of you,” Kono said with a smile.

“We all need to learn,” Trent said. “And we’ll need the help for room service. It won’t be 24 hours, right?”

“No,” Danny said. “The club officially closes every night at 2 a.m. and reopens at 11 a.m. We aren’t going to try to have full services around the clock.”

“Pastry chefs?” Jonathan asked. He was making notes on his iPad, keeping track of the conversation as well as he could.

“I don’t know any quality pastry chefs,” Trent said. “Stanton Street bought their desserts. So classless.”

“We can advertise for them,” Kono said. “We need housekeepers, front end staff, maintenance people, hosts and hostesses.”

“They’ll all be fully cross-trained so if a club member wants a fresh beach towel, any employee will get it for them,” Danny said. “Division of labor has its place but we will not have employees say it is not their area. The entire club will be the responsibility of everyone who works there.”

“We’re going to use the UPS philosophy in our training,” Jonathan said. “Everybody has to do every job.”

“Even the boss-men,” Kono said, sounding like she was gloating.

“Think I haven’t cleaned plenty of toilets in my life?” Steve asked, making her laugh.

“I’m sure you have,” Kono said, laughing at him.

“That is an excellent plan,” Trent said with genuine enthusiasm. “Chefs can become isolated, have a higher opinion of ourselves than we deserve. Scrubbing toilets will be an excellent reminder what the club is really about.”

“That was our thinking,” Danny said. “Do we know anyone who can run the gambling cruise? And we need a captain for the boat.”

“We thought that would be Steve’s job,” Kono laughed, the others ribbing him good-naturedly.

“Some days it will be,” Steve agreed with a wink. “We’ll still need a full time captain and crew. Plus personnel for the casino.”

“We’ve talked to the Madame, Michelle, about people in her line of work,” Danny said.

“What line of work?” Malia asked in curiosity.

“She’s offers bondage and all that goes with it,” Steve said.
“Ahhh,” Malia said in understanding. “She doesn’t want to work for you?”

“She said she has too many clients already,” Danny replied. “But she’s being extremely helpful with referrals for possible experts. She’ll have a list to us by next week. Once we find the one or two we want, we’ll order the equipment they request.”

“What about…well… sex workers?” Jonathan said, trying to be as diplomatic as he could.

“We have four friends in the business we’re talking to about working for us,” Steve said. “We’ll pay whoever we hire to get a license as a massage therapist. We want everything as legitimate as possible.”

“Four won’t be enough,” Trent said.

“Those are the only ones we’ve confirmed. We got referrals from them,” Danny explained. “We’ll start talking to all the possibilities as soon as there is furniture in the offices downtown.”

“It should be delivered Monday,” Jonathan said. “Four desks and a conference room table.”

“Excellent,” Danny said. “We’ll get you all keys in case you need access.”

“Why would we need a key?” Chin asked.

Danny shrugged, checking with Steve. “Brainstorm in the middle of the night? Check on the logo design?”

Chin shook his head, his smile warm. “All right, brah. We promise not to sleep there.”

“We probably will,” Steve said with a laugh. “Did you add at least one couch to the order?” he asked Jonathan.

“Yep. Made sure it was seven feet long so you’d fit,” Jonathan confirmed.

“That’ll leave plenty of room for Danny too,” Kono teased, making Danny frown over at her.

“You Ferrari privileges are revoked,” Danny said sternly.

“You don’t mean that,” Kono said with a dimpled smile that would have convinced almost anyone of almost anything.

“For a week,” Danny amended, not entirely immune to her charms.

“We could meet there instead of here,” George suggested.


“That’s for sure,” Trent agreed.

“Bring your swim suits next week,” Danny said. “It will still be light enough to swim before dinner.”

“You won’t be swimming yet,” Malia reminded Steve gently.
“I know. Maybe I’ll wade in up to my knees.”

“Maybe,” Malia said. “If you’re careful.”

“Steve and careful do not mix,” Danny reminded her.

“As I am all too aware,” Malia said with a glance at her watch. “It’s late and I have work tomorrow.”

Everyone else agreed that they needed to leave as well. It took half an hour before all the good-byes and confirmations of their next meeting were complete. Kono left after extracting their promise that they would let her know if they needed her.

“We’ll be fine,” Danny assured her with a light kiss on her cheek. “Thanks, babe.”

“Ohana,” she reminded him before leaving so he could close and lock the door.

“It’s bed for you,” Danny told Steve who was sitting on one of the steps leading upstairs.

“You too,” Steve said, reaching out with his left hand.

“I need to tidy the kitchen,” Danny said, leaning closer to kiss him.

“Trent took care of most of it. The rest will wait until morning,” Steve said, a request in his tone.

“All right,” Danny conceded easily. “Let’s get naked and go to sleep.”

“I really, really want to have sex with you,” Steve said as he led Danny up the steps.

“Ditto. But not for another couple of days. It could displace your fracture if we do it too soon.”

“I know,” Steve sighed, looking down at the sling that still tightly bound his injured arm to his body.

“It was nice of Trent to make shish kabobs so you didn’t have to cut my meat for me.”

“It was,” Danny said, helping Steve out of his clothes. “I’d like to eat your meat.”

“You can’t say things like that when you can’t follow through,” Steve said with a frown down at Danny’s head.

“Well,” Danny said, kneeling in front of Steve’s naked body. “If we’re careful and you stand up, we won’t be putting pressure on your arm, will we?”

“I like your thinking,” Steve said, thrusting his hips forward.

“I see you and your desperation,” Danny said, caressing the hair on Steve’s strong thighs. “I expect reciprocation when you are fully recovered.”

“Absolutely. I’ll even buy you another Ferrari.”

“What would I do with two Ferraris?” Danny asked before leaning forward to lick a wet stripe up the side of Steve’s hardening cock.

“No idea,” Steve admitted, steadying himself with his left hand on Danny’s shoulder. “Could you
please get on with it?”

Danny laughed before showing mercy and taking Steve in his mouth as far as he possibly could. Steve groaned in relief and in arousal and in approval.

“Your mouth is… your talent can’t be… oh babe,” Steve moaned, only half sentence formed. The rest of his words were cut off by Danny’s actions. He was tonguing Steve the way he’d learned Steve enjoyed the most, paying special attention to the underside and the ridge at the top. Those were two of Steve’s surest triggers.

Danny’s expertise brought Steve to a hard, fast orgasm, one that made him weak in the knees. Danny guided him to the edge of the bed so Steve could recovered, his breathing too fast, his cheeks high with color.

“I’ll be right back,” Danny whispered, disappearing into the bathroom. As promised, he soon returned, wiping his mouth with a fresh towel.

“What d’ya want?” Steve slurred, trying to focus on Danny.

“I’ll take care of it, babe,” Danny said, pulling back the covers. “Come on.”

“Huh,” Steve grunted, finally rousing himself enough to get into bed. He leaned up against the headboard so he had a clear view of Danny touching himself, enjoying his own strokes on his hardness. “Does that feel good?” Steve whispered, licking his lips. “I love touching you like that. Stroking you up and down, up and down. Feeling you get harder and harder until every muscle in your body tenses up and you explode. All your arousal shoots from the tip of your beautiful pink penis, splattering you and me and the bed. I could watch that all day, the look on your face, the way your tongue frantically licks your lips. You are so beautiful when you come…” Steve’s words did the trick, Danny erupting all over the towel he’d strategically placed on his stomach. “Perfect.”

“Mmm…” Danny moaned, turning his head enough to kiss Steve until they were both breathless. “Love you.”

“I know,” Steve said, throwing the small towel on the floor. “Will you make me waffles in the morning?”

“Do you even have to ask?” Danny asked, reaching over to turn out the light. “I’d go to Belgium to get you waffles if that’s what you wanted.”

“Nope. Just you and waffles right here,” Steve said to Danny’s contented sighs.

“The way it should be,” Danny said.

“Yep,” Steve agreed, stroking Danny’s ruffled hair with his left hand, content to bask in the comfort they had carved out for themselves. He was a very lucky man and he knew better than to take it for granted.
Expectations

Chapter Summary

Some expectations will be fulfilled; some will be filled in ways no one could have anticipated.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“No great mind has ever existed without a touch of madness.” ~ Aristotle

On August 1st, Steve and Danny met Holokai for breakfast at a diner not far from the location of what was about to become their club. All the papers had been signed, all the funds accounted for the week previous. They had decided the keys would still be handed over on the first, as they agreed when they originally met.

“Are you all packed?” Danny asked when they were all seated with cups of coffee.

“Finally,” Holokai sighed. “I’d forgotten how much trouble it is to move.”

“I understand that,” Danny said. “You’re flying out tomorrow?”

“I am,” Holokai confirmed. “My furniture was shipped yesterday. I’ll still beat it to the mainland but that’s fine.”

“You have a place there?” Steve asked.

“Not yet. I’m subletting an apartment for now. It belongs to the dean of the law library. She’s on sabbatical in Egypt for the next three months.”

“That works out,” Danny said, smiling up at the waitress who had stopped by for their orders. He had the feeling that he and Steve would become well acquainted with everyone who worked at this diner.

“Gentlemen, professor,” she said, smiling radiantly at them all. “What can I get for you?”

They all made their requests, and she promised it wouldn’t be long until they had their food.

“We want you to know that any time you return to Hawaii, you’ll have a place to stay,” Steve said, handing Holokai a small black box tied with an aqua ribbon.

“What’s this?” Holokai asked, accepting the box.

“A lifetime membership to Club 445,” Danny said, smiling at Holokai’s surprise.

“I can’t accept this,” Holokai protested. “It’s…too much.”
“Of course it’s not,” Steve said. “We want you to visit whenever you want, for as long as you want. This makes sure you have a bed to sleep in and friends to talk to.”

“My family still lives here,” Holokai reminded them with a laugh.

“Family is fine,” Danny said, waving it away. “But sometimes you need a place to get away from even family.”

“True that,” Holokai had to agree, untying the ribbon. Inside the box was a black card with their Club 445 logo printed on it. His name was embossed in gold, the Member Until date listed as Lifetime. “This is quite an honor.”

“The stakeholders voted unanimously to give it to you,” Steve said.

“Thank you,” Holokai said, admiring the classy card. “This is beautiful.”

“Our graphic artist designed them,” Danny said. “We can emboss them on premises. The bar code on the back will be used to track visits and expenses for ‘regular’ visitors.”

“Very smart,” Holokai said.

“Yours will register as unlimited comps,” Steve said.

“That’s too much,” Holokai said again, pleased with their generosity. He hadn’t had anything to do with founding the club except selling them a house he could no longer live in.

“If you’re in Hawaii for Halloween, we’d love to have you at our party,” Danny said after the waitress had brought their food to them.

“I doubt I’ll be back until next summer,” Holokai said. “Too much to do.”

“Understandably,” Steve said as they ate the delicious, hearty breakfast.

“You look much better than you did the last time I saw you,” Holokai said, referring to the visit they had shared only a couple of weeks after Steve had been injured by his kidnappers. Holokai didn’t know the whole truth about what had happened but knew enough that Steve had been scheduled for surgery before they took possession of his house.

“I am,” Steve agreed.

“He should be wearing his sling but…” Danny said with a shrug and an impatient shake of his head.

“Dr. Ho said it wasn’t necessary,” Steve replied, making Holokai laugh.

“I know you’ll be glad when you can swim again,” Holokai said in sympathy.

“Three more weeks,” Steve said sounding far more patient than he was feeling. Some days he thought he was going to come out of his skin if he didn’t submerge himself in the ocean. Wading in up to his waist had not been enough from the first time he’d been permitted that much contact.

“If your collarbone is fully healed,” Danny cautioned, sounding much like he’d said it many times
“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Steve grumped. “Why don’t you take Danny with you to Boston? He can help you unpack.”

Holokai really laughed at that. “You’d be lost without him. Everyone knows that.”

Danny didn’t look nearly as smug as he had the right but Steve chose to simply ignore him. “You mostly don’t want me to cut up your waffles for you,” Danny reminded him.

“Okay,” Steve agreed, stealing some of Danny’s bacon and successfully evading the fork he used to try and stop him.

“Do you have the pieces in place for the club?” Holokai asked with a smile at their shared affection.

“Almost,” Danny said. “The renovations will start tomorrow. And thank you again for letting us start the pool installation.”

“I barely notice them,” Holokai assured him. “They are surprising quiet considering they have a backhoe just a few feet from the house.”

“I’m glad,” Steve said. “Once the renovations are finished, we’ll have the new furniture delivered. Next week, we’ll start training the staff we’ve hired so far. We’ll start at the office downtown then move to the house when it’s ready.”

“That makes sense,” Holokai agreed. “Do you have many staff left to hire?”

“Honestly, we aren’t sure,” Danny admitted. “Kono and Jonathan are hiring most of them. Trent is hiring all the kitchen and catering staff. We meet the candidates after the three of them decide. We’ve only vetoed a couple of their hires.”

“Any particular reason?” Holokai asked in curiosity.

“I had arrested one of them when I was still a cop. That he’d been arrested for possession with intent to sell didn’t make it onto his application,” Danny said.

“I can see why you’d say no there,” Holokai confirmed.

“One of the candidates we simply didn’t like,” Danny said, Steve frowning at the memory. “Neither of us could say why but there was something just not right.”

“Got to go with your instincts,” Holokai agreed.

“Once word got out about our benefits and profit sharing, we’ve had no shortage of applications,” Steve said. “Makes it easier to say no to the ones we don’t think will fit in.”

“I heard rumors about a day care center?” Holokai said.

“It sort of happened,” Danny said. “Our accountant has four-year-old twins. We realized that other staff members would have children too and we wanted to make sure childcare was never an issue. That’s how Keiki Care was born.”
“It’s an excellent idea,” Holokai said in approval. “Have you found a manager yet?”

“No but we’re interviewing two more candidates this morning,” Danny said, sounding weary. “If we don’t find anyone we both like, I may have to run it for a while.”

“I thought at least three of the applicants were just fine,” Steve protested.

“Fine, Steven. We don’t want *fine*. We want perfect,” Danny said, waving his fork in demonstration of the importance of the quality of the manager for Keiki Care.

“As you said,” Steve agreed. “Repeatedly.”

Holokai couldn’t help but laugh, their mode of communication familiar to him from the handful of times he’d been in their company. He enjoyed their relationship although he didn’t try to define it in his head. He was pretty sure they hadn’t defined it to their satisfaction as of yet. “I’m sure you’ll find the perfect person.”

“I hope so,” Steve said. “We’ve interviewed more people for this position than all the others combined.”

“Exaggerate much there?” Danny asked, giving Steve the side-eye.

Steve shrugged, flinching at the movement.

“See. This right here is why you need to *wear* your sling, not stuff it in one of your pockets,” Danny scolded warmly, magically producing the sling from beneath the table before gently helping Steve secure it. “There.”

“Thanks,” Steve said reluctantly, picking up his coffee with his left hand.

“The more you wear it, the sooner you can swim,” Danny said in a bargaining tone of voice.

“That’s something you tell me in a vain attempt to get me to wear it,” Steve shot back, no edge to his voice.

“If only it worked,” Danny sighed, trying to sound put-upon.

“It does sometimes,” Steve tried, Danny shaking his head in dismay.

“Never,” Danny said before focusing back on Holokai when he asked about the boat and its readiness.

“She’s shipshape and Bristol fashion,” Steve assured him with a smile. “We’ve found almost all the personnel we need, including a gaming manager who was looking to relocate from Vegas to Hawaii. She doesn’t have a place here so she’s staying aboard. If it works out, it may become permanent. If she prefers to live ashore, we’re fine with that as well.”

“I considered living aboard,” Holokai said, momentarily lost.

“I can understand why,” Steve said.

“I almost had to buy him another boat so he’d let us make the renovations to yours,” Danny said,
Steve trying to look his most innocent.

“Giving it up was almost harder than the house,” Holokai agreed. “But life must move forward.”

“True that,” Steve agreed, glancing down at his watch. “We should probably be going. Our first appointment is in twenty minutes.”

“Of course,” Holokai agreed, standing with them. The waitress had given them the check a few minutes earlier after their reassurances that there was nothing more they could possibly want.

“We’ve got this,” Danny said, taking the check from Holokai. “As a thank you.”

“That’s totally unnecessary,” Holokai protested, smiling at them both. “I’m glad my house suited you. And I know it will be filled laughter and good spirits.”

“We’re having it blessed tomorrow. We’d have had it done today but the priest said the waves were too prime to ignore,” Steve said with a laugh.

“When they are up, you have to honor that,” Holokai agreed a little wistfully. He was too consumed with his own thoughts of nostalgia to miss the momentary silent exchange between Steve and Danny at the mention of the priest.

In truth, it was one of the few fights they’d had. Steve insisted that they had to have the house blessed, to have its spirits appeased so they would gracefully accept them as the new owners. Danny stopped short of calling it superstitious hocus-pocus but it was a near thing. With the reinforcement of Kono and Chin, Steve finally won, Danny giving in. He carefully kept any additional opinions about the ritual to himself.

“Let us know when you’re coming home and we’ll treat you to dinner, and breakfast,” Steve said as Holokai and Danny shook hands. They parted as though they’d been long-time friends, Danny remarking that Holokai was someone he’d like to have in their life if it had worked out.

“I know what you mean,” Steve agreed as Danny drove the Camaro toward the building that housed their temporary office. “You’ll be at the blessing tomorrow, right?”

“Yes, Steven. I promised I’d come,” Danny said evenly.

“All right,” Steve said, looking out his window.

“Do I need to say I’m sorry again?” Danny asked, reaching over for Steve’s left hand and interlacing their fingers.

“No,” Steve said.

“I will if you need me to,” Danny said, sounding regretful.

“I don’t. I hate that we fought,” Steve said, looking over at Danny like he didn’t know what he’d do without Danny in his life and couldn’t risk ever losing him. Danny looked at him with the exact same expression.

“Me too,” Danny said, giving Steve’s hand a quick squeeze.
“Kono said she was glad she’d witnessed it because she was beginning to believe we weren’t real,” Steve said with a laugh.

“Kono says lots of things,” Danny said.

“No one talks as much as you,” Steve reminded him as he often did.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah,” Danny retorted, as he often did. They continued to argue about who talked more as Danny pulled into the parking area for the building, finding a convenient space. They made their way to the office, not surprised to find Kono and Jonathan already there.

“Hey bosses,” Kono said with her usual cheerful chirp. “How was breakfast?”

“Delicious,” Danny said, accepting a fresh cup of coffee from Jonathan. “How long have you been here?”

“Not so long,” Jonathan said.

“I caught early waves then came in,” Kono said, leading Steve and Danny to her office. Every wall was covered with pictures of table linens and flower arrangements and the seemingly thousands of other things the guys had never honestly considered as a part of owning a club. “I made an appointment with Julian Fowler for this afternoon. You know,” she said when she saw the confusion on Steve and Danny’s faces. “He was referred to us by Michelle.”

“Ahh…” Danny said with a nod. “The master.”

“He has a very sexy voice,” Kono said, giggling like a girl, something the guys would never say to her.

“We need to find someone soon,” Steve said, looking at the gigantic timeline in the main area of the office.

“We will, babe,” Danny assured him. “But there was no way I could have Erick Smithson prowling the basement.” He shivered dramatically, Steve mostly ignoring him. He’d heard long and rambling rants about Erick’s many, many flaws and now tuned them out for the most part. He hadn’t been referred by Michelle which Steve and Danny admitted was their first mistake. Erick had heard about the basement through the grapevine and had promptly applied for the position.

“We know, Danno,” Kono assured him, patting him solicitously on the arm.

“Excuse me,” a deep, unfamiliar voice said from the doorway. “Am I in the right place?”

“Depends,” Danny said, turning to look up – way up – at the man who had just entered. “Who are you looking for?”

“I’m Lou Grover,” the man said by way of explanation. “I’m here to talk about Keiki Care.”

“You’re Lou Grover?” Kono said, expressing the surprise they were all feeling. When they imagined what the potential manager of their day care center would look like, Lou Grover would never have been their image. He was…huge, taller than Steve. He looked far more likely to storm the club wearing Kevlar than he looked like someone who would spend his time caring for toddlers.
“That’s what my driver’s license says,” Grover said in open amusement. “You were expecting me?”

“Yes,” Kono said. “We just weren’t expecting….”

Danny gently lowered Kono’s hand before she could embarrass any of them any more than they already were. Awkward didn’t begin to describe the atmosphere that had descended over the room. “I believe what Kono is trying to say is that we are delighted to meet you.”

“I’ll take that,” Grover said, shaking Danny’s hand as he introduced himself as well as the other three.

“Would you like a cup of coffee?” Steve asked, finding himself in the unusual position of looking up at Grover.

“If it’s no trouble,” he agreed, dwarving the coffee cup in his hand. It was black with the aqua imprint of the club, one of the trial runs they had rejected. It had seemed too big and too inelegant but in Grover’s hands, it looked like a dainty teacup.

Once they all had their coffee, Steve and Danny led Grover into the conference room, closing the door almost all the way.

“I hope you didn’t have any trouble finding us,” Steve said politely as they settled at the round table.

“None at all. Ms Kalakaua was very helpful when she set up the appointment,” Grover said.

“Kono has been invaluable,” Steve agreed. “But don’t tell her we admitted it.”

“Certainly not,” Grover agreed.

“Your work history is impressive,” Danny said, reviewing the application. “Your references sound almost too good to be true.”

“Bribes can work wonders,” Grover joked, Steve and Danny laughing with him. “I’ve been lucky. When I decided police work wasn’t for me, my kids were five and three. My wife and I couldn’t afford day care. She had just gotten a tenure-track position and couldn’t walk away. I watched my kids, some neighbor kids, and suddenly I was running a day care. I’ve never looked back.”

“Your wife is teaching at U of H?” Steve asked, leaning closer to Danny to see Grover’s work history.

“She is. She said she’d had enough of Chicago’s winters and was coming to Hawaii with or without me. The kids voted with so here I am,” Grover said.

“I grew up in New Jersey,” Danny said in sympathy. “I still miss real winters but I can’t imagine going back.”

“Well,” Steve said in a moment of triumph. “This is a record. He’s never admitted that before.”

“Smug is not a good look on you,” Danny said, trying to gruff. But it was spoiled by his smile.

“Okay,” Steve said, turning his focus back on Grover who was trying to hide some of his amusement. “You don’t want to open a day care of your own?”
“I considered it,” Grover said. “But prices are exorbitant. I can’t imagine what I’d have to charge just
to cover the debt service. And if it’s not my name on the bottom line, I don’t have to worry about
trees that crash the roof during storm season.”

“There is that,” Steve confirmed.

“Do you have a property?” Grover asked in polite curiosity.

“We are in the processing of purchasing it,” Danny said. “It’s two and half acres. It has an
abandoned Methodist church on it. We’re trying to decide if we’re going to knock it down or convert
it to our needs.”

“There are pluses and minuses to both,” Grover agreed. “A playground?”

“An old one. It will be completely renovated. We’ve been looking at playground equipment but have
almost decided to have it made by local carpenters,” Danny said.

“It can be difficult to find equipment that is sturdy and fun,” Grover agreed.

“More so than we thought,” Steve said. “We’re in touch with some local builders who will make it to
our specifications.”

“He wants a fort, naturally,” Danny said.

“And a boat. A big one,” Steve said with an innocent grin.

“A really big one,” Danny confirmed.

“You’re Navy?” Grover asked.

“Retired,” Steve agreed.

“How did you go from Navy to day care owner?” Grover asked in curiosity.

“It was a circuitous route,” Steve assured him. “Do you know about our plans for Club 445?”

“I did my research before I came here,” Grover confirmed. “There will be people who won’t use
your day care because of your…other business pursuits.”

“It will be primarily for our employees,” Danny said. “When there is space available, we’ll accept
enrollment for a fee. Anyone who wants to enroll their child will know about all of our interests.”

“You’re going to run it at a loss?” Grover asked, somewhat surprised by the idea.

“We’re in the position that we can afford to underwrite most of the costs,” Steve said.

“I see,” Grover said. “How many employees do you anticipate having at Keiki Care?”

“That will be determined by the person we hire to manage it,” Danny said. “We’ve done preliminary
research on day care centers but don’t feel any need to be the experts.”
Grover nodded at that, considering this information. “And if it loses money, this isn’t a problem for you?”

“It will lose money,” Steve confirmed. “We know that. The Club and the gambling cruise will make more than enough to support the day care.”

“I see,” Grover said, still considering everything that had been said. “I’m not certain I’m the man for the job.”

“May we ask why?” Steve asked, respecting his honesty.

“I’m accustom to running a tight ship, making sure the bottom line is well above shoreline. I don’t know how I could run a business that’s intended to be a money-loser.”

“We don’t intend to lose money,” Danny clarified. “We simply acknowledge that the day care will not be a profit center.”

Grover shook his head at that, trying to understand what they were telling him. It all seemed… so backward somehow. “Thank you for your time,” Grover said, standing and extending his hand to Danny. “I hope you find the person you need.”

“I think we have,” Steve said, standing to look up at Grover. “Don’t say no just yet. Think it over for a couple of days. Talk to your wife and children. Tell them the salary and conditions. Or don’t. Give us a call at the end of the week.”

Grover shook his head again, looking at Danny and Steve like he wasn’t entirely sure they were speaking a form of English in which he was fluent. “I’ll call. I doubt my answer will be different.”

Danny nodded, picking up one of the Club 445 notepads, writing down their direct cell phone numbers and the proposed salary. He handed it to Grover who stared down at the figure.

“Is this per year?” Grover asked in confusion.

“Per month,” Steve corrected. “Plus a company van from the fleet. Or a car but that could be more complicated for you.”

“You’re both…” Grover shook his head again, carefully folding the paper and putting it in his pocket.

“You can say it,” Danny laughed. “Crazy. Loco. None of it’s new.”

“Call us at the end of the week. When you agree, we’ll show you the property and the four sets of blueprints we currently have,” Steve said.

“I’m going to say no,” Grover warned, following them out to the main door.

“Call us,” Danny said, watching him walk down the hall before leaving the building.

“What’d he say?” Kono asked when they were back in the conference room.

“No. He said no,” Danny told her, gathering up the papers.
“Of course he did,” Kono laughed. “He call you crazy?”

“He stopped short of saying it,” Steve said.

“But he was clearly thinking it,” Danny said with a shrug.

“He has to say yes,” Jonathan said, leafing through the file they had on Grover. “He’s ideal.”

“He’ll realize that,” Steve assured them confidently. “You’ll call his wife?”

“I did already when I read his references,” Kono said. “She and I are having lunch tomorrow.”

“Double-teaming him is for the best, for him and us,” Steve said.

“I agree,” Danny said, leading Steve into their shared office, Kono and Jonathan trailing behind and sitting on the couch facing their desks. “What’s next?”

They discussed the details to be handled that day, their planning interrupted by the arrival of the second candidate for manager of the day care center. She was a former nun which nearly terrified Danny. Steve silently laughed at him, finding her charming and knowledgeable. After she had left to their thanks, Steve told Danny that they would hire her as assistant manager if Grover approved.

“Or as manager if he refuses,” Danny said quietly.

“Will you be able to deal with her?” Kono teased him.

“She’ll be your responsibility,” Danny decided.

“Right. China and former nuns,” Kono laughed, resuming her seat on the couch.

“When is Julian Fowler coming?” Steve asked, checking the calendar on his computer. He didn’t see the appointment listed.

“At 1:30,” Jonathan said, rounding Steve’s desk to look at his calendar. “It isn’t showing up?”

“I told you it wasn’t synching,” Danny reminded him calmly.

“I’ll call Toast,” Jonathan conceded. “I thought I had it fixed.”

“No one’s blaming you,” Steve assured him. “I’m sure it’s a software glitch.”

Jonathan nodded as he pulled out his phone to call Toast. They had become fast friends soon after they’d been introduced, sharing many interests outside of their love of computers and programming.

Jonathan moved out of the way when Kamekona came into the office, pointing to the bosses’ office so Kamekona could easily find them. Not that it was particularly difficult but Jonathan thought it was courteous to clarify just in case.

“Bossmen,” Kamekona said when he was inside their office. “Lovely lady.”

“Howzit?” Kono asked with a smile up at him.
“You know,” Kamekona said, sitting next to her. “Can I have twenty five security officers?”

“No, Kame,” Steve said firmly. “We said 18 were plenty.”

“How many times have you asked us the same question?” Danny said in exasperation.

“I have 19 absolutely confirmed. I have six additional I think would valuable assets to the endeavors to be undertaken,” Kamekona said.

“No you can’t have 19 or 25,” Danny said. “We already paid you to become a helicopter pilot. We’re going to buy a helicopter for you to fly. We agreed to hire Flippa as assistant director of security. We aren’t giving you twenty five officers.”

“Eighteen won’t cover the cruise,” Kamekona said.

“It will only require one officer per night,” Danny reminded him. “Are you trying to hire more personnel to settle some debts you’ve neglected to inform us of?”

“Not me, brah,” Kamekona said quickly, a little too quickly.

“Come tell me which uniform shirt you want,” Kono said, winking at Danny.

“Fine,” Kamekona said, following her into her office, his continuing complaints returning to Steve and Danny in their office.

“Unbelievable,” Danny said quietly, looking up at Jonathan when he returned to their office.

“Toast will be here at 1:30,” he said to Steve’s nods.

“Thanks,” Steve agreed, watching him walk away from his door.

“What are you doing?” Danny asked quietly, perching on the edge of Steve’s desk and smiling down at him.

“I’m not doing anything,” Steve said, looking up at him in complete innocence.

“Uh huh,” Danny said, leaning down to kiss him. “Thinking about when he was a client.”

“Was not,” Steve denied, wondering why he sounded like a four year old.

“Okay, babe,” Danny said laughing at Steve’s expression.

“We still need four or five professionals,” Steve said, trying to distract Danny and rid him of the mischievous look in his eye.

“Yes we do,” Danny agreed, turning Steve’s computer enough to see it. “I got three inquires yesterday. You know any of these?”

Steve studied the emails that Danny was showing him, all including recent photos. They knew it was technically illegal to ask that photos be attached but they were taking it on faith they wouldn’t be sued for requesting them, on a purely voluntary basis. “I’ve met her,” Steve said, pointing at one of the native women. “She goes by Katey.”
“Even though she’s Hawaiian?” Danny said, studying her photo.

Steve shrugged. “Have you called her?”

“No,” Danny said. “I don’t know her and didn’t want to call until I checked with you. You want to talk to her?”

“I guess,” Steve said, still studying the biography she’d attached. “Does this read like fiction to you?”

“Hmmm…” Danny said, considering it as he read it again. “Maybe a little. I watched Franklin Goes to College several times in my drunken college days. I don’t remember her being in it.”

Steve pulled up the Internet Movie Database, checking the credits for the cult classic. “She isn’t listed.”

“What about Rockin’ Through the Night?” Danny said.

“Nope,” Steve said, reading the entire credits for the movie. “Maybe let’s not call her.”

“Kono,” Danny called, knowing she’d show up almost instantaneously.

“Yes Bossman. We don’t have phones or any other modern communication conveniences,” she said, making Steve laugh and Danny frown.

“Okay,” Danny said, turning Steve’s computer so Kono could see the photos. “Do you know any of them?”

“Mmm…don’t think so,” she said. “Wait. Is that Kele Nguyen?”

“It is,” Steve confirmed. “You know her?”

“By reputation,” Kono said. “Hey, Jon, Kame. Come in here for a minute.”

The guys came as requested, looking at the pictures on Steve’s screen. “You know Kele Nguyen?” Kono asked them.

“Bad news,” Kamekona said, shaking his head.

“My thoughts exactly,” Kono said.

“Jonathan?” Danny prompted when he frowned at Steve’s computer.

“I’ve met her,” Jonathan said reluctantly. “She’s… case-hardened.”

“I see,” Steve said. “No votes?”

“I vote no,” Kono said, followed by the guys.

“All right,” Steve said, putting her information in the reject folder. “Know either of these?”

“I know Tamara Thomas,” Jonathan said. “I mean, I’ve met her through friends. She’s really nice.
You’d never know she was in the business.”

Steve and Danny shared a glance before looking up at Kono and Kamekona. “You know her?” They both shook their head, Steve putting her in the ‘to call’ folder. “This is the last one,” he said, showing them a picture of a handsome man with Asian features. “This is Chuck Fong.”

“I went to high school with him,” Kono said, leaning closer. “Charlie was one of the smartest people I’ve ever met.”

“Have you met him?” Steve asked Kamekona and Jonathan.

“I don’t know him,” Jonathan said.

“He ate at my shrimp truck several times,” Kamekona said. “Very friendly. Always surrounded by giggling girls.”

“Sounds like someone we need to talk to,” Steve said, checking with Kono. “Will that be awkward for you?”

“No,” Kono said. “I’m just…wondering why he’s…you know.”

“You know why we did it, babe,” Danny reminded her. “It’s never simple.”

“I know,” Kono said. “Can I call Charlie?”

“Of course,” Steve agreed, giving her his phone number. He waited until the others had left before looking up at Danny. “Do you think she judges us?”

“Babe,” Danny said, shaking his head before kissing him. “Everyone judges us. We judge everyone we meet whether we admit it or not.”

“I guess,” Steve said.

“Why do you care?”

“Kono is so open-minded and completely live-and-let-live. I was taken aback by her disapproval of Chuck’s decision.”

“I don’t think it was disapproval as much as… surprise,” Danny said. “You know how it is when your expectation doesn’t match reality.”

“I guess so,” Steve agreed. “Is it time for lunch yet?”

Danny laughed at him, leaning closer to kiss him again. “No but I’ll get you something to eat. What do you want?”

“Can we go get some pineapple ice cream?” Steve asked.

“You can. I’ll drive you and pay for it,” Danny said, leading him out of their office. “We’re out.”

“Be back?” Kono called back.

“Milkshake,” Kono ordered.

“Pint of black cherry,” Jonathan requested.

“Gallon of hibiscus,” Kamekona said.

“Roger that,” Danny said, leaving the office before they could eat them out of business.

Chapter End Notes

I am very sorry it's been so long since I posted an update. Life and all its complications got in the way. I'm hoping my muses have returned for a while and the next chapter will be up much more expeditiously.

Thanks for your patience!
Chapter Summary

The Club 445 ohana continues to grow, with decisions – small and large – being made.

_The family you come from isn't as important as the family you're going to have._ ~Ring Lardner

The next day, Kono and Jonathan went to the restaurant where they’d made reservations, arriving a few minutes before noon. They alerted the hostess that they were expecting Mrs. Grover and would she please bring her over as soon as she arrived? The hostess assured them she would keep an eye out before returning to her station.

Precisely at noon, Mr. and Mrs. Grover followed the hostess to the correct table. Jonathan stood to greet them, shaking Mr. Grover’s hand like they were old friends.

“I told him you hadn’t invited him,” Mrs. Grover said when they were all seated. She glanced over at her husband, ‘you really ought to listen to me’ written all over her face.

“You are planning to talk about me. I have as much right to be here as anybody,” Mr. Grover protested lightly.

“Still,” Mrs. Grover said with a shake of her head. “Thank you both for the invitation.”

“You are more than welcome, Mrs. Grover, Mr. Grover,” Kono assured them both.

“Please,” Mrs. Grover said. “I’m Shelly. This is Lou. We’re going to be ohana as they say here.”

“You are awfully sure of yourself there,” Lou said to her.

“I don’t know why you are pretending you aren’t going to take the job,” Shelly said, focusing back on Kono and Jonathan. “I tried to explain to him that losing money on the daycare actually makes sense.”

“Thank you,” Kono said with a smile, pausing when the waitress arrived to take their orders. “Steve and Danny interviewed a former nun following their interview with you, Lou. She understands the requirements of running a non-profit business.”

“Then they should hire her,” Lou insisted.

“They are considering her as the assistant manager, with your approval,” Jonathan told him.

Lou shook his head, looking at Kono and Jonathan like they had lost their minds. That could be the only explanation. “This is insanity.”

“Of course it’s not, dear,” Shelly said in a tone that implied she had said it several times previously. “The day care is primarily for the employees. It can’t make money when it’s an employee service.”
“It will be a co-op,” Jonathan said. “There will be a set number of hours they will need to work. That will help to offset some of the costs.”

“It will still require a full time staff,” Lou pointed out. “What are the proposed hours?”

“The club will be open from 11:00 a.m. to 2 a.m.,” Kono said. “Keiki Care will need to be open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. or so. We won’t have it open later than that.”

“Eight hours,” Shelly pointed out to Lou.

“What about employees who work after 6?” Lou asked.

“The club isn’t going to be open around the clock,” Kono said. “If an employee has a small child, they shouldn’t be working the late hours at any rate.”

“There is that,” Shelly agreed.

“You do know about all the services the club intends to provide, right?” Jonathan asked Shelly, wanting to make certain there were no surprises.

“Yes, dear. Lou told me. A club that offers those discreet services will fill a void for those seeking solace when they can find it nowhere else.”

“That is our philosophy,” Kono agreed.

“Is it true that Commander McGarrett is allied with the Yakuza?” Lou asked. “It’s the cop in me. I can’t help but ask.”

“He did a favor for the local head of the Yakuza. He has no other affiliations,” Kono assured them.

“He strikes me as a man of solid integrity. I did some research,” Shelly admitted with a laugh.

“He is,” Jonathan confirmed. “As is Danny Williams.”

“There is less intel on former Detective Williams. Everything I did find had nothing but praise for him as a cop. Until he was accused of stealing from the evidence locker,” Lou said.

“Charges that were completely unfounded,” Kono said.

“I sensed that,” Lou said. “The man I met yesterday was not a thief.”

“No he’s not,” Jonathan agreed. “He can be loud and grumpy and opinionated. He is also as honest as they come.”

Lou nodded, pausing with the others when the waitress returned with their meals. “Can I ask what the relationship is between Commander McGarrett and Williams?”

Kono laughed at the question. “You can ask. We can’t answer. They can’t answer. They are crazy in love. We know better than to ask where’s it going. They’ll get there eventually, don’t you think?” she asked Jonathan.
“They are inevitable. I’ve never seen two people more in love but less sure what it meant,” Jonathan said.

“Why are they so uncertain?” Shelly asked, intrigued by these two men she had never met.

“Commitment issues,” Kono said sadly. “Danny was married. It ended badly from what he’s said. Then his ex-wife and daughter were killed in an accident. I think he’s scared of having his heart broken that badly. And Steve…well, Steve is… uhm….”

“Steve is unaccustomed to being committed to anyone or anything outside the Navy,” Jonathan said.

“They sound like they have some work to do,” Shelly acknowledged.

“They’ll figure it out,” Kono said in complete certainty. “We’ll knock their heads together if we have to.”

“Like true friends,” Shelly agreed with a smile.

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Steve and Danny went to the offices when Kono and Jonathan went to the restaurant. They had all been at the blessing ceremony, most of their employees there as well. Trent had arranged for coffee and malasadas, treats appreciated by everyone. The ceremony was scheduled to start at 10:30 but with one thing and another, it was closer to 11:00 before the priest began the ritual.

“Thank you for being there,” Steve said as Danny drove them toward town.

“You’re welcome, babe. I enjoyed it,” Danny admitted, pulling off the lei from around his neck and giving it to Steve. “And it was good to see everybody.”

“It was,” Steve agreed. “You want to go by the carpenter’s shop and talk about the playground?”

“We can’t,” Danny said. “We have an appointment at 12:15.”

“What appointment?” Steve asked, looking over at him in confusion.

“We’re interviewing another possible master. Michelle referred him too.”

“I thought we decided to hire Julian,” Steve said.

“We did. We are. But he isn’t going to work seven days a week,” Danny pointed out.

“He’s as needed,” Steve said. “Do we need two masters?”

Danny shrugged, pulling into the parking lot. “I told Michelle we’d talk to him.”

“And you didn’t think to tell me?” Steve asked, getting out the Camaro to follow Danny into the building.

“I did tell you. You weren’t listening,” Danny informed him.

“You didn’t tell me. I’d have listened if you had. And we don’t need two masters. We do need a
mistresses."

“I know,” Danny assured him. “Michelle sent me three names yesterday. I called them and am waiting to hear back.”

“All right,” Steve said, unlocking the door to the offices and pulling it open so Danny could proceed him in. “You want some more coffee?”

“Yes please,” Danny agreed, continuing into their office. “I have voice messages from two of the mistresses. You want to talk to them today if they’re available?”

“Sure,” Steve agreed as he entered their office with two steaming cups of coffee. “We need to eat lunch.”

“I’ll call after we talk to…uhm… Kobayashi, the master.”

“Kobayashi?” Steve repeated. “Like the Kobayashi Mari?”

“The what now?” Danny asked, looking over at him with a confused expression Steve found way past adorable.

“Never mind,” Steve said, waving it off. “I’ll call one of the mistresses.”

“You can call Mistress Leah. Since you fancy yourself Han Solo,” Danny said, passing him the slip of paper where he’d written down her number.

“Yes, Mr. McGarrett. Michelle gave us your number.”

“Yep,” Steve agreed, taking out his phone to dial the number. He blocked out Danny’s conversation, focusing his attention on the woman with the sultry voice who answered the phone. “I’d like to speak with Mistress Leah, please.”

“This is Mistress Leah,” she replied. “In what way may I be of assistance?”

“This is Steve McGarrett. Michelle gave us your number.”

“Yes of course. I was expecting your call much sooner,” she said making Steve feel like he’d been naughty by not calling before now.

“Yes. Well,” Steve said, clearing his throat. “Are you interested in coming to our office for an interview?”

“It would be so much cozier if you came here,” she purred.

“I’m sure it would,” Steve said. “But as we are interested in hiring you for the club, and not for ourselves, coming to our office makes imminently more sense.”

She laughed at that, a full-throated laugh. “All right,” she said, sounding less seductive and more business-like. “When would be convenient?”

“We have time this afternoon,” Steve said, glancing over at Danny who was holding up three fingers. “At three o’clock.”

“That will be ideal,” Leah agreed.
“Excellent,” Steve said, feeling some relief that he was going to be able to end the conversation very soon. He gave her the address and she assured him she’d be there at 3:00 o’clock. “Thank you.”

“Thank you,” Leah returned before hanging up.

“Did yours work out?” Steve asked Danny when he’d hung up.

“She’ll be here at 2:00,” Danny said. “Why is your face red?”

“Leah’s very…uhm…seductive,” Steve mumbled.

“I see,” Danny laughed. “I’ll make sure you aren’t in a room with her alone.”

“No need to worry about me,” Steve assured him with a wink.

“I do know that,” Danny said, still laughing.

“Hello,” Steve called when they heard the front door open.

“Yes, I’m here to speak to the owners of Club 445,” a strange voice said.

“Of course,” Steve agreed, going to their office door. He stopped in surprise at the appearance of the man standing in their lobby. He was short, a little shorter than Danny. He had a round face and wore round glasses. His black hair was tidy but not fashionable. The trousers and light blue button down he wore were clean and pressed but not at all what Steve would have expected a master to wear.

Steve shook himself out of his surprise, waving at the door to their office. “You must be Kobayashi. Please come in.”

“I am. Thank you,” the man said, following Steve into their office.

“This is my partner, Danny Williams,” Steve said, indicating Danny who had come around his desk.

“Haven’t we met?” Danny asked, studying the new comer as they shook hands.

“It’s possible, Detective Williams,” Kobayashi said. “I am the assistant medical examiner.”

“You’re Dr. Max Bergman,” Danny said in realization.

“Generally, yes,” Max agreed. “However when I am not at work at the morgue, I am known as Kobayashi.”

“You’re the master Michelle sent to us,” Danny said, a hint of disbelief in his voice.

“I am indeed,” Max said, accepting their invitation to sit in one of the visitor’s chairs. “As I do not fit the standard expected profile of a master, my…clients begin already learning not to make unfounded assumptions.”

“I guess they would,” Steve had to agree.

“Have you been doing this long?” Danny had to ask, still surprised by the identity of their guest.
“For quite some time, Detective. Being a doctor gives me special insight into how best to fulfill the needs of my clients,” Max said.

“Please, call me Danny,” he requested. “I haven’t been a detective for a while now.”

“Certainly,” Max agreed.

“So you work with dead people during the day and submissives at night,” Steve said, still trying to wrap his brain around it.

“Indeed, Commander,” Max said. “I prefer being with people who do not talk overly much. The dead and the submissive fit that bill perfectly.”

“They would,” Steve agreed. “And call me Steve.”

“Of course,” Max said in acknowledgement.

“Why are you interested in working for us?” Danny asked.

“I have too many clients,” Max said. “I wish to extract myself from those relationships. Working for your club would assist me in maintaining a professional distance from any who seek my expertise.”

“Oh,” Danny said in understanding. “They want more from you than to submit.”

“Many do,” Max said. “I would imagine you had much the same concern in your previous profession.”

“To a degree,” Danny said. “Some of our clients were needier than others. Some we’re hiring. Some we’ll never let join the club.”

“Indeed,” Max said with a nod.

“We’ve already talked to Julian Fowler,” Steve said. “He agreed to work a maximum of three nights a week. But the master will be on an as-needed basis.”

“I spoke with Julian,” Max said. “It is a small island, after all. We are on friendly terms. If you wish to utilize both our services at your club, we will share the work evenly.”

“I see,” Steve said, glancing over at Danny. “That helps.”

“It does,” Danny said. “We haven’t had lunch and were thinking of ordering in. Would you like to join us?”

“Oh,” Max said, surprised by that. “Yes, I would.”

“I’ll call Kamekona,” Danny said. “You want something to drink?”

“Some water,” Max said, still surprised by this turn of events.

“Come on,” Steve said. “I’ll show you.” He led Max out of their offices and into the break room, getting out three bottles of water. When he turned to give one to Max, he had moved to stand by the
door of Kono’s office, looking at all the pictures on display. “This is Kono’s office. She’ll eventually
be the manager of the club.”

“I see,” Max said, accepting the water and drinking from it. “Have you made most of these decisions
already?”

“Some,” Steve said, looking at the master timeline tacked up beside Kono’s door. “We don’t have a
director for Keiki Care but hope that will change today. Then we’ll decide if we’re going to renovate
the church or tear it down. The boat is ready and we have a gambling director. We still need a crew
for it. The department managers are hiring most of their own staff, with our approval. We still need a
few more… paid companions but we aren’t particularly worried about that. We have enough
contacts that we’re sure we’ll find the right ones.”

“And a mistress to complement the master you hire?” Max inquired, noting that slot on the board
remained empty.

“Michelle gave us three more names. We’re meeting two of them this afternoon. Do you know Leah
or Madeline?” Steve asked.

“I’m acquainted with them both,” Max said, turning to look at Steve with a considering expression.
“I do not believe either of them are who you are looking for.”

“Why’s that?” Danny asked as he joined them in the lobby area. He accepted the water from Steve,
drinking from it as they waited for Max to answer.

“Leah is extremely resistance to suggestions. She would be ill-suited to being employed by anyone,”
Max said, considering every word as he said them.

“She wants to come for an interview,” Steve said.

Max could only shrug at that. “It’s possible she wishes to evaluate the competition. She rarely does
things without a purpose that would suit her needs.”

“That’s good to know,” Steve said. “What about Madeline?”

“She is… not kind,” Max said diplomatically. “Anyone in this profession must have a certain amount
of toughness. She takes it to the next level.”

“They were both referred by Michelle. Does she know about this?” Steve asked.

“I am not well enough acquainted with Michelle to know,” Max said. “It is possible she has never
observed them in a session.”

“There is that,” Danny said. “Do you have a recommendation for a mistress?”

“Do you know Susannah Reyes?” Max asked. “She’s the best I’ve seen, other than Michelle.”

“I’ve never heard the name,” Steve said, looking over at Danny. “You?”

“No,” Danny said. “Does Michelle know her?”

“She trained with Michelle,” Max said.
“I’ll give her a call if you have her number,” Steve said, waiting as Max took out his phone. Instead of giving Steve the number, Max dialed it, listening.

“Hello beautiful,” he said with the first smile they’d seen since he arrived. “I’m great. I’m talking to the owners of the new club…that’s the one…do you want to talk to them?” Max listened briefly, nodding. “Certainly.” With that he handed his phone to Steve.

“Hello,” Steve said in greeting.

“Is this Detective Williams?” she asked in a friendly voice.

“This is Steve McGarrett,” he said. “Are you interested in coming in to talk with me and Danny?”

“I need to consider it, Mr. McGarrett,” she said honestly. “Max said he was going to talk with you but I never thought about working for you myself.”

“I see,” Steve said, appreciating her honesty. “May I give you my number? If you decide you’d like to talk, you’re welcome to give me a call.”

“Yes, that would be fair,” she agreed, accepting his number. “Perhaps I’ll be in touch.”

“I hope so,” he said before hanging up. “She has to think about it.”

“ Makes sense,” Danny said. “And what about you, Max? Are you signing on? We can guarantee it will be a wild ride if nothing else.”

“I would like to come aboard,” Max agreed. “I will also work a maximum of three nights, on an as-needed basis. Julian and I will negotiate between us the days that we work.”

“Excellent,” Steve said. “Can you and Julian make a preliminary list of equipment you’ll require? Once we have a mistress, we’ll consolidate the lists and place the order.”

“I would like to see the basement,” Max said.

“Of course,” Steve agreed. “Kono and Jonathan should be returning soon. We’d take you but we have interviews at 2:00 and at 3:00.”

“That is fine. I have nothing on my calendar for the rest of the day,” Max said, turning to look at the front door when Flippa came in.

“Howzit?” he said in his customary greeting.

“Flippa,” Steve said, accepting the bags. “Tell Kamekona thanks.”

“Will do,” Flippa confirmed, leaving with a nod.

“Come into the break room,” Steve said, leading the way. He and Max sat at the table as Danny got plates and utensils out for them. Steve passed out the cartons, handing Max the fried tofu.

“How did you know I ate only tofu?” Max asked in surprise.
“You are allergic to shrimp,” Danny said. “I wasn’t going to risk killing you.”

“I appreciate that, Detective,” Max said, digging into his lunch.

They were about half way done with their meals when Kono and Jonathan arrived. Introductions were made, Kono and Jonathan joining them at the table.

“Well?” Danny asked, waiting as Kono stole one of his shrimp.

“Well what?” Kono asked back. “Lunch was delicious. I ate too much. Jon had dessert.”

“Delicious,” Jonathan confirmed.

“That’s wonderful for you both,” Danny said with a frown. “What did Mrs. Grover say?”

“She liked the food too,” Kono said, easily dodging Danny’s hand when he tried to smack her. “And so did Lou who came with her.”

“What did he say?” Danny asked with growing impatience.

“He said yes,” she said, beaming.

“Finally,” Steve said with a sigh of relief. “Will you call Anna Maria?”

“Absolutely not,” Danny said. “Kono said she’d be in charge of china and former nuns.”

“Former nuns?” Max asked.

Kono explained Danny’s aversion to both dishware and former nuns, everyone but Danny laughing at her tale. “I’ll call her,” Kono promised, giving Danny a sloppy kiss.

“You are a menace, Kalakaua,” he grumped, the sparkle in his eyes giving him away.

“Lou and Shelly are coming tomorrow so we can show them the church. They’ll have a list of equipment the daycare will need,” Jonathan said. “Maybe Anna Maria can come meet with them then?”

“Excellent idea,” Kono agreed. “I’ll see if she’s available.”

“We’ll call the carpenters,” Steve said. “If they are available, we can go see the playground equipment plans.”

“Perfect,” Kono agreed, dancing back to her office.

“It’s coming together,” Steve said in relief.

“We knew it would,” Danny reminded him warmly.

“Are you ready for this much craziness?” Jonathan asked Max as he stole some of Steve’s shrimp.

“I believe I will manage to adjust,” Max decided, smiling like he’d come home to a place where he knew he was welcome.
One week before Halloween, Steve and Danny began to question why they ever thought opening their own club was a good idea. It seemed as though if anything could go wrong, it had. They discussed changing the name to Murphy’s Club but decided they didn’t need to tempt fate.

The building inspector wouldn’t issue them the certificate of occupancy for the main house because he said the deck they had added did not have enough bolts. They had the deck designed to overlook the (not yet finished despite the contractor’s continual promises) horizon pool. The builder said he had used at least one and a half times the number of bolts required but the inspector said the construction was unsound. Steve and Danny thought the two men might come to blows but as the inspector would ultimately win, the builder agreed to add the extra (“entirely unnecessary”) bolts. They hoped that would mean that they would be able to officially occupy the club prior to their Halloween party. Maybe they would even have a pool to swim in. They had already refused to pay the contractor his final installment until there was water in the pool, water they could swim in not just the rain that had accumulated as they waited and waited and waited for it to be done.

Not having the certificate of occupancy had put them behind in training. Kono, Jonathan, and Trent had done everything they could to train the employees they had hired at the downtown offices but they had hoped to be doing it “live” inside the club.

To their amazement, the building inspector had no problems with two of the three guest houses they had placed on the property. They were factory built rather than stick built which the inspector assured them was a sound construction method. Each of the guest houses had a bedroom which took up the majority of the space, a bathroom with a sinful garden jacuzzi tub, and a tiny kitchen with the barest essentials tucked into the corner of the small sitting area. The inspector would not provide the third house with its CO until the plumber installed a new toilet. The one the builder had installed supposedly had overly tight bolts which could cause the toilet to split apart and destroy the bathroom. The plumber told Steve and Danny that in his opinion the inspector had suffered a blow to the head to make such a claim. But again, the inspector would win so the plumber promised to have the new
toilet installed as soon as he possibly could.

Several of the club employees they had hired quit before their first day of work. Jonathan expressed surprise at their decision but Trent said those sorts of things happened and they would find replacements.

The china Kono had ordered to be imprinted with the club logo would not be received until late November or possibly early December. They could hardly fault the manufacturer who had experienced a fire in their facility in Maine. The president of the company called to apologize and promised they would get the imprinted plates to Hawaii as soon as possible. There was, however, no way that they could ship them until mid-November at the very earliest. If they weren’t shipped by November 15, they would be delayed even longer as the plant always closed the week of Thanksgiving. There was nothing Steve or Danny could say in response to that, appreciating the care the manufacturer showed toward their employees.

Jonathan and Kono wanted to delay the club’s working opening until the china was received but Steve and Danny had vetoed that idea. The other stakeholders sided with inviting the brand new members to begin experiencing the club November 1, without the perfect china in place. It was decided they would find the least expensive yet most presentable dishware available in Hawaii and use it until the Club 445 china was received. Steve assured Danny that he would not have to be involved in the selecting or purchasing of said china. Danny mostly ignored him.

The gambling boat had been renovated to remove two of the bedrooms, additional space for gaming. But the Coast Guard was refusing to provide them with clearance to take it out of the harbor. Steve had called Catherine but she said it was entirely out of her hands. The renovations had been more extensive than the Coast Guard had approved. And they did not yet have a Coast Guard certified commercial captain to pilot the boat. Only after they had made the changes required by code and hired a commercial captain would they be legally able to sail the boat on the open sea.

Keiki Care was not a source of concern, thankfully. Grover and Anna Maria were taking care of almost every detail. After lengthy discussions among all the stakeholders, it was decided to tear down the church and build the daycare from scratch. The club had donated the few stained glass windows still remaining to a local congregation along with the dozen or so pews that had not been damaged. They had the Hawaiian priest come and bless the church before it was razed. He readily agreed to return when the daycare was built, to bless the new building and by extension all who would occupy it.

The church had been built with a basement, which they agreed would make a good storm shelter. It was not mandatory but there was no way they were going to risk the lives of their charges should there be an unexpected tsunami.

Grover and Anna Maria were hiring their workers, each approved by Steve and Danny. They had vetoed only one selection, mainly because they thought she was plain weird. Grover and Anna Maria were fine with their veto, having decided to hire her mainly because of her work history. They had no reservations finding a substitute for her.

One of the few bright spots they could find with the club itself was the number of people who had already applied for membership, only one week after Phyllis had posted the form to their sparkling new website. Danny, naturally, found a reason to be grumpy about the applications.

“We have 172 people who have already applied,” Danny complained mildly, looking at the forms
“This is a good thing, Danno. Go with the glass being half-full, please,” Steve said in some exasperation.

“I’m very much a half full kind of guy,” Danny protested, not appreciating Steve’s laugh in response. “And yes, 172 applications would be good if we hadn’t made the regrettable decision to interview each and every one of them.”

“We don’t have to interview the ones we know,” Steve pointed out. “That eliminates about 90 of the applications.”

“I don’t know that many people,” Danny said with a frown.

“Between us we do,” Steve said. “Dorothy is checking all of their credit ratings. If they don’t hold up, we don’t interview them.”

“Yes,” Danny said, leaning back in his chair with a tired sigh. “We need a secretary. We can’t expect Kono to call all of these people to make appointments. She has way too much to do already.”

“Okay,” Steve agreed. “Do you have someone in mind?”

“No,” Danny admitted. “Kono.”

“Yeah, bossmen?” Kono replied when she was leaning on their doorjamb. There was a noticeable lack of sparkle in her eyes and she seemed… tired, worn-out.

“First of all,” Danny said, studying her. “When was the last time you had a day off?”

Kono shrugged at that, putting her hands in the pockets of her jeans.

“All right,” Danny said. “We need a secretary. Do you have a cousin you can recommend?”

“Mmm… “ she said, chewing her lip. “Yeah. My cousin Okalani. She works part time at one of the banks and hates it.”

“Can you have her call us if she’s interested?” Steve requested.

“Sure,” Kono automatically agreed. “Anything else?”

“Take the rest of today off. And all of tomorrow,” Steve instructed warmly.

Kono shook her head at that. “There’s too much to do.”

“It will get done or it won’t, babe,” Steve reminded her. “You’re wearing yourself out. You and Jon. Where is he?”

“Picking up the reminders for the Halloween party we may not be having,” Kono said, sounding disappointed.

“Don’t sweat it, babe,” Danny said, crossing over to kiss her forehead. “It will all work out. We’ll throw out the reminder cards and send out ‘party is postponed – watch for the new date’ cards if we
have to. Go. Don’t show your face until Thursday’s stakeholders’ meeting.”

“You’ll call if you need me?” she asked, looking worried.

“Don’t we always?” Danny replied, escorting her to the door. “Have fun. Catch some wicked waves.”

“I will,” she said with a smile. “Thanks.” She left with one last look over her shoulder as though she was sure they were going to call her back and tell her they were just kidding.

“Hey Jon,” Steve said when he had connected. “Everything’s fine. We realized we’ve been abusing you and Kono. You are both officially off until the stakeholders’ meeting …. If we get the certificate of occupancy, we’ll pick up the reminders and send them out. If not, we’ll send out new save the date cards, date yet to be determined…. okay… okay… go have some fun. You deserve it.”

Steve took a deep breath when he’d disconnected, looking over at Danny. “Okay, what disaster do we tackle next?”

“Turns out, the shirt company didn’t get the aqua polos,” Danny said, staring at his computer. “They want to know if navy blue will work in the interim.”

“Well?” Steve said, sounding wrung out. “It’s not that I object to navy blue in anyway. But everything is aqua, black, and khaki. Do they think navy will just blend in?”

Danny gave a weary sigh, picking up his phone. “Hi Kali…yes, I am calling about the shirts…. I thought you said they would be received in plenty of time…. You don’t know where they are…” Danny repeated slowly. “UPS lost them… lost them…” His voice was beginning to rise in a way Steve knew was particularly dangerous and relieved Danny of his phone.

“Hi Kali… What did UPS say exactly?… somewhere between San Francisco and Hawaii… no it doesn’t make sense… do you want me to call UPS?… all right. Keep us posted,” Steve said, disconnecting and putting down Danny’s phone with exaggerated care. “How do shirts go missing between the city where they were loaded onto a plane and the city where the same plane landed? There are no stops in between.”

“I have absolutely no idea,” Danny said, shaking his head in disbelief. “UPS says it’s the fault of the airline. The airline blames UPS.”

“It wasn’t a UPS plane?” Steve asked, leaning one hip against Danny’s desk.

“They contracted it to a commercial plane. Saves money, or it’s faster, or…I have no idea,” Danny said with a wave of dismissal as he stared at Steve’s jeans. “Why have I not noticed until now that you’ve lost weight?” Danny asked, tugging on the sagging waistband of Steve’s jeans.

“I haven’t lost weight,” Steve said, pulling his jeans higher to counteract Danny’s lowering of them. “These jeans are at least 100 years old. They were the only clean pants I could find this morning. You’d already left for the meeting with Grover when I got out of the shower.”

“Oh,” Danny said, studying the tattered jeans. “They are pathetic. Apparently we need a maid.”

“Apparently,” Steve said. “Let’s go home and do exciting things like laundry.”
“Only if we stop for lunch. We don’t have any food in the house,” Danny reminded him.

“Yeah, we definitely need a maid,” Steve agreed, sticking his head into Jonathan’s office that was also being occupied by Dorothy, their accountant. “We’re leaving. Kono and Jon aren’t coming back. Go to lunch and don’t some back.”

“You sure?” she asked, trying to settle some of her dark curls.

“Of course. The twins aren’t going to recognize you if you continue to work this many hours,” Steve said.

“Only until we open,” she reminded them. “Things will settle down.”

“I hope so,” Danny said, telling her about the polo shirts that had gone missing.

“Good heavens,” she said, shaking her head. “Maybe we should call it Murphy’s Club.”

“We’ll see things differently after we’ve had some time off,” Danny decided. “Take off tomorrow if you want. Jon and Kono are.”

“I’ll work half day tomorrow,” she decided. “I only have a few things to finish up for the stakeholders’ meeting.”

“That’s fine. We’ll probably be in a little late,” Steve said with a wink that added an adorable blush to her cheeks.

“Have fun,” she called as they left the office.

“Oh crap. We didn’t bring the applications,” Danny said, stopping in the middle of the hallway.

“We aren’t working until tomorrow,” Steve informed him. “Come on.”

Danny sighed and looked up at Steve in indecision. “There’s so much to do.”

“Yes there is. And we’ve worked six weeks with practically no time off. One afternoon will not be disastrous.”

“We have enough disasters already,” Danny said, taking out his club phone when it rang. “Hello?”

“May I speak to Danny or Steve?” a young woman asked politely.

“This is Danny,” he said.

“This is Kono’s cousin, Okalani. She asked that I call you,” she explained.

“Oh good,” Danny said. “I’m going to put you on speaker.”

“That’s fine.”

“Kono said you work part time at the bank. Are you interested in working part time for us while you’re still there? If it works out, you can leave the bank and work full time for us.”
“I’d love to,” Okalani said, sounding giddy. “Kono talks about you and the club all the time. I’d never turn down a chance to work for you.”

“Excellent,” Danny said. “The office is closed this afternoon and probably tomorrow. Can you come Friday morning for an interview? Just a formality really.”

“I work Friday 8 to 12,” she said in disappointment.

“Of course,” Danny said. “How about 1:30 then? Or better yet, come as soon as you get off and join us for lunch. We all eat together on Fridays.”

“That’s a lovely tradition,” she said. They could hear the smile in her voice.

“We get a lot done over food,” Danny confirmed.

“Is there anything you don’t eat?” Steve asked. “We generally order Thai.”

“Thai is my favorite,” she responded. “I love all of it.”

“Very good. We’ll see you Friday, sometime after noon,” Danny said.

“I’ll be there. Thank you so much,” she said.

“You’re welcome,” Steve said.

“Oh, I’ll send you my resume so you’ll have it for reference,” she said.

“That’s fine. You can send it to Kono. She’ll give it to us,” Steve said to Danny’s nods.

“I’ll do that. Thank you again,” she said with bright enthusiasm.

“Excellent,” Danny said before disconnecting. “I like her already.”

“Me too,” Steve said, getting into the driver’s side of the Camaro. He was really worried when Danny didn’t give lip service to Steve being a control freak. “What’s occupying your mind?”

“Huh?” Danny said, looking over at him, his eyebrows drown together in a way Steve found especially adorable.

“You are too pre-occupied to even bitch about me driving your car,” Steve said.

“Oh,” Danny said with a token hand wave. “It was thinking how fortuitous it was that Noshimuri gifted us with the money. Since we aren’t making any right now.”

“First of all – fortuitous? Who even says that?” Steve asked.

“I do. That’s who says it,” Danny informed him. “And secondly?”

“Secondly, gift is not nor has it ever been a verb. Gift is a noun. We can’t just go around verbing nouns willy-nilly. It will bring the end of civilization as we know it.”

“Dude,” Danny laughed. “You know you made verb, which is itself a noun, into a verb while railing
against the corruption of the English language.”

Steve shrugged, smiling back at him. “Made you laugh.”

“Yeah, it did,” Danny had to agree.

“And Hiro’s money is very handy,” Steve said. “But I could have supported us even if he hadn’t
given us the bloodless money.”

“How much exactly do you have in your savings?” Danny asked.

“I told you that you have permission to snoop any time you want. And it’s combat pay. It
accumulates when you don’t have to buy food, clothes, or pay rent,” Steve pointed out.

“There is that,” Danny said. “Maybe I will snoop in your accounts.”

“We should make them our accounts,” Steve suggested. “It’s ridiculous for us to have separate
accounts.”

Danny stared at him momentarily before turning to look out his window.

“Seriously. Everything I have is yours,” Steve said to the back of Danny’s head.

“No,” Danny said. “What you brought to this relationship is yours. What I brought, which admittedly
is far, far less, is mine.”

“I know I have more liquid assets than you do,” Steve said calmly. “I don’t care. Why do we keep
our money separate? We share all the expenses. Why not do it from one account?”

“Because…” Danny stopped before he said something he’d end up regretting. What Steve was
saying made sense from one perspective. But what about when Steve decided Danny wasn’t the
person he wanted to spend the rest of his life with after all? No promises had been given. No
guarantees. No…declarations of everlasting love. Maybe that was what made Danny refuse. Of
course Steve loved him. But not enough, apparently, to say it out loud.

“Because what?” Steve prompted as he pulled into the parking lot of Danny’s favorite pizza place.
He shifted in his seat to look over at Danny and his furrowed brows. “Danno?”

Steve didn’t especially like the food that this restaurant served but never hesitated to come when
Danny suggested it. Danny hadn’t even suggested it this time. Steve had driven them here purely
because he knew how much Danny like it. That was love, surely. Steve had bought Danny a Ferrari,
for God’s sake. Why wasn’t that evidence enough? Why did the absence of three words stop Danny
from believing in Steve? Was he so shallow?

“Because the day will come when you’re tired of me grousing at you and using words no one else
uses and you’ll tell me we’re done,” Danny said, words he had some trouble saying. But Steve
wanted to know and there it was – Danny’s lingering insecurities from getting divorced from the
woman he thought he’d grown old with as they watched, hand in hand, Grace grow up and have
children of her own.

“Not going to happen,” Steve said, reaching over for Danny’s hand and holding it in both of his
larger ones. Still, they fit together perfectly. “We are it for us, babe. We are partners in life and in
business. I know Rachel hurt you. And I’m sorry she didn’t know what she had. But you are stuck with me for as long as the sun comes up and you hate pineapple on pizza.”

Danny looked at the love shining in Steve’s eyes, the truth of what he’d said in every line of his body. Of course Steve loved him. Words didn’t make it so. Actions did. Danny leaned closer to kiss Steve. “Yeah. We’re it,” Danny said, smiling at the smile that blossomed on Steve’s face.

“So we can combine our accounts,” Steve said, needing to make sure he’d won this argument.

“We’ll discuss it,” Danny hedged, undoing his seatbelt. “Come on SEALboy. I need pizza and beer.”

“And you’ll have it,” Steve confirmed, kissing his head as they approached the front door.
Since You Opened the Door

Chapter Summary

The Club finally opens. Steve makes personal decisions about which he informs Danny in his own way.

Chapter Notes

So, this is the last chapter. Hard to believe.

Not sure I feel it's "complete." I'd like to promise to write an epilogue but those kind of promises are really hard for me to keep.

Thanks to everyone who has read, commented, and left kudos. Y’all rock!

[When you realize you want to spend the rest of your life with somebody, you want the rest of your life to start as soon as possible. ~Nora Ephron, When Harry Met Sally]

“Sign these,” Steve said, placing a tiny stack of square papers on top of the keyboard Danny had been using. Now he was staring down at the papers instead.

“What are they?” Danny asked, picking up the top one. He frowned when he read what it said.

“Signature cards,” Steve confirmed. “I moved your money to my accounts, closed your accounts, and added you to what are now our accounts.”

“Babe,” Danny said, shaking his head. “I said we’d discuss it. Not combine our accounts without checking with Dorothy about any legal consequences.”

“I did talk to Dorothy,” Steve said, picking up a pen and giving it to Danny. “She said it made sense, financially and legally. Please sign the cards so I can give them to Okalani to return to the bank.”

Danny sighed, looking from the cards to Steve and back. Despite Steve’s happy and hopeful expression, Danny felt compelled to provide at least a token protest. “These are the sorts of decisions we discuss, Steven. Not make unilaterally without so much as a by your leave.”

“Discussion is overrated,” Steve said, hiding his triumphant smile when Danny accepted the pen and signed each place there was a sign here Post-it.

“This is how much we have?” Danny asked, staring at the final card that represented what was now the majority of their combined assets.
“Yep,” Steve confirmed, taking all the cards back.

“Babe,” Danny said in amazement. “That’s… a lot of money.”

“I told you it’s mostly combat pay. Plus what I got from being a whore.”

“Paid escort,” Danny corrected.

Steve shrugged. “Our house was paid off before either of us was born. My funds accumulated.”

“So I see,” Danny said. “Wow. I’m… just… wow.”

Steve didn’t bother to respond, going into Kono’s office to give the cards to Okalani. “Thanks,” he said when she assured him she’d file them as soon as she went to work the next morning, her last at the bank. As of Monday, she would be the full time secretary for 445 Inc.

“I’m glad you are here,” Kono said, grinning up at Steve. “Come and see what is now located on my computer.”

Steve raised one eyebrow as he rounded her desk, glancing at her computer. When he realized what it was she was showing him, he called out to Danny.

“What?” Danny yelled back.

“Come in here.”

“Of course. Because I only exist to be at your beck and call,” Danny groused as he entered Kono’s office.

“That’s me,” Kono corrected, standing up so Steve could have her chair and Danny could crowd up next to Steve.

“Right, right,” Danny said, looking down at Kono’s computer. “Oh my God in heaven,” he said. “It’s about damn time.”

“It is,” Kono said happily. “Certificate of occupancy, signed, sealed, and delivered.”

“Finally,” Okalani said.

“Jon,” Kono yelled. “Get in here.”

He very soon appeared in the doorway, looking expectantly at the small crowd already there. His excitement at hearing the news was equal to theirs. “We are finally ready to rock and roll.”

“Most definitely,” Danny agreed. “Only five weeks after we expected it. Okay, okay….”

“We can still have the luau for Thanksgiving,” Kono said. “Invite everyone who was invited to the Halloween party.”

“That makes sense,” Steve said, thinking it over. “That gives us three weeks to complete our training. We can open for real after Christmas.”
“Right,” Danny agreed. “Have the shake-down starting Thanksgiving, close for Christmas week, open for real in time for New Year’s Eve.”

“Perfect,” Kono said. “We’ll start making the calls. I’ve got Trent. He’ll call his people. Jon, you call housekeeping. Okalani, you’re on invitations.” She gave the rest of the assignments, Steve and Danny secretly amused as she gave marching orders to everyone, including them.

“You want food or linens?” Steve asked Danny as they returned to their office, their heads buzzing with excitement.

“I don’t care,” Danny said. “You have a preference?”

“I’ll take food. You deal with tablecloths and towels.”

“Roger that,” Danny agreed, sitting at his computer and going to the site of the linen provider with whom they already had a contract.

~0~

Before any of them could believe it was possible, Thanksgiving was on them. It was an hour before they were going to open the gates and the doors for their confirmed members, possible members, the curious who would never become members, and more than a few journalists from around the islands.

Steve and Danny had asked that all the employees gather in the dining room at 4:00 p.m. It was filled almost to overflowing with the staff, their aqua shirts creating an ocean of excitement in the room.

Every single staff member of Club Four-Four-Five was in the dining room, chatting, drinking, laughing. The stakeholders were all present, the men resplendent in tuxedos and aqua bowties, just like the ones worn by Steve and Danny. The women were wearing cocktail dresses, along with the diamond and aquamarine bracelets that were gifts from the Club. The guys had matching cufflinks, adding a bit of sparkle to their formal-wear.

The six women and five men the Club had hired as escorts - the term they all finally decided on - looked amazing in their evening ware. As incongruous as it seemed, they each wore a name tag, agreeing it would simplify things in the long run. All of the staff members wore nametags, as small and discreet as they could find. Most of the staff chose to use their real names but Steve and Danny said they could choose a pseudonym if they were more comfortable that way. The majority of the staff agreed that living on Oahu rendered pseudonyms moot but appreciated the consideration the bosses were showing in asking.

Also present were all of the employees of the gambling boat, dressed much like the other staff members in their aqua polos and khaki pants. Their name tags were shaped like the boat, distinguishing them as “gaming specialists.”

After much discussion among the stakeholders, they had christened the boat Mea Lanakila, receiving the Coast Guard okay shortly after the naming ceremony. The week prior, they had finally hired her captain courtesy of Catherine. When Catherine’s friend Isabella decided to retire from the Coast Guard, Catherine recommended she talk to Steve and Danny. As soon as they offered her the position, Isabella agreed to Captain the Mea Lanakila, to the delight and relief of Steve and Danny. Isabella and Suzanna, the gaming manager, became fast friends at their first meeting, ensuring the gambling boat was handled.
Lou and Shelly Grover were in attendance, along with Anna Maria and her girlfriend Ka’ena. There was some quiet speculation that Ka’ena was the reason Anna Maria was no longer a nun but no one thought it their business to ask, especially with Danny’s dire warnings of how nuns, former or current, took revenge on those who asked impertinent questions.

Lou looked fabulous in his tuxedo with his aqua bowtie, Shelly in a sparkling cocktail dress of the same color. Anna Maria and Ka’ena wore subdued cocktail dresses, their bright smiles the only accessory they needed.

The entire staff of Keiki Care was there, enjoying the chance to mingle with their bosses and other employees of 445 Inc. They were wearing the same aqua shirts as the Club employees, ready to serve in whatever capacity they might be needed. Their name tags were shaped like the wooden fort that was the nucleus of the playground that had been finished several weeks earlier.

Trent was outside checking on the pig that would be the centerpiece of the entire luau. Many of his staff were with him, some inside chatting with other employees.

Steve, Danny, Jonathan, and Kono were dressed to the nines, the men resplendent in tuxedos and aqua bowties. Everyone agreed that no one was more stunning than Kono in her black sequined dress that fit her like it had been designed specifically to make her even more beautiful, not that anyone thought that was possible. She had blushed and laughed when the guys shared their reaction to her amazing dress.

Danny could only stare at Steve, the tuxedo showing off his toned body to absolute perfection. Danny hadn’t missed the quiet gasps that had greeted Steve’s appearance. Steve had said the appreciation was as much for Danny but Danny could only shake his head.

At precisely 4:15 Steve and Danny stepped up onto the small stage that had been placed at one end of the dining room. The stage held a microphone flanked by two huge, gorgeous bouquets of native flowers, provided at no charge by the florist they had contracted to provide all the flowers for the Club.

It took only a few minutes before the chatting quieted, all the focus on Steve and Danny.

“Welcome,” Danny said warmly, smiling at the crowd returning his expression. “Thank you all for being here and for everything you’ve done to make this night possible.”

“There is no way we could be standing here without each and every one of you,” Steve added. “You are the reason there is a Club Four-Four-Five.”

This statement was met with rousing applause and some scattered whistles.

“This isn’t time for long speeches,” Danny said when quiet had descended once again. “Mostly what we absolutely need to say is mahalo.”

“Mahalo,” Steve added, wondering if his face could actually break from smiling so much and so hard. He was fine if it happened. “Before we release you to continue enjoying the food and drink before taking your positions, I have an announcement to make.”

“What announcement?” Danny asked him quietly, confusion on his face.

Steve winked at him, reaching out to Kono who handed him a tiny black and aqua box. “Thank
you.” He unnecessarily straightened his tuxedo jacket before turning his full attention to Danny. “Danno,” Steve said, clearing his throat before continuing. “We are partners in work. I want it clear to everyone that we are partners in life.” To Danny’s complete shock, Steve went down on one knee, opening the box to show Danny two simple silver bands, one significantly larger than the other. “Daniel Williams, I love you. Will you marry me?”

Danny could only stare down at Steve who was gazing up at him with love shining in his eyes.

“Danno,” Steve said, a very quiet laugh in his voice. “Will you say yes so I can stand up?”

“Yes, yes, yes,” Danny said, vaguely aware of the cheers that erupted in the dining room. He was engulfed in a warm, all encompassing hug before Steve kissed him, making certain that there was no doubt left in anyone’s mind just what Danny meant to Steve. “Yes, you goof. I will marry you,” Danny said up to Steve when he had straightened.

“I love you,” Steve whispered into Danny’s ear. “I’ve loved you since you opened the door of room 445.”


“Don’t think I don’t know that,” Steve said, finally releasing Danny enough to accept the congratulations of their friends, employees, ohana.

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