Two Strong Hearts

by a1_kitkat

Summary

Prompt Fill for @malextruelove on tumblr

Alex demands proof Michael no longer loves him; a handprint bond connects them when Alex is kidnapped by his own father and used as bait to trap Michael.

Alex wasn’t drunk or so he insisted when Maria told him he’d had enough and threatened to cut him off. Michael looked up from his spot at the bar and peered at the two friends; Maria looked worried while Alex looked angry.

“Alex, please?” Maria said. Michael watched her reach for Alex’s hand and he flinched when Alex snatched it away.

“Don’t, Maria” Alex hissed. “You owe me”

They both turned, looked at him but Michael stared back with a deadpan expression on his face. He was sure Alex was getting to go at both of them.

“Alex, go home” Maria said before she turned her back and walked away. A clear indication she wasn’t going to serve him anymore tonight.
Michael observed Alex for a moment before he slid off the stool and carefully approached him.

“Alex” he started.

“Leave me alone, Guerin” Alex snapped through gritted teeth.

But Michael knew it was an act, he could see the pain beneath the tears that were threatening to fall.

“Come on, let me drive you home” Michael offered.

He placed his hand on Alex’s lower back and started to guide him toward the door. A glance over his shoulder, he waved to Maria in a ‘I got this’ gesture and she nodded her head in understanding.

Once they reached the parking lot, Michael started searching Alex’s pockets for his keys. He was still mildly surprised when Alex wrenched free of his grasp and glared at him.

“Don’t fucking touch me” he hissed.

“Alex, please?” Michael whispered.

He hated seeing Alex like this; hated that he was responsible but it was necessary. They were doomed to constantly repeat the same unhealthy pattern. Too many factors outside of their control kept shoving them back together only to tear them apart again. They both needed to accept they weren’t meant to be and just move on. Michael had taken that first step; Alex had not.

“I loved you” Alex whispered through his unshed tears “and you loved me”

“Yeah” Michael agreed with him.

“She’s my best friend”

“I know; I’m sorry”

“Aren’t you?”

“Alex-”

“Are you really sorry?”

“You know I am”

“Then prove it”
Michael blinked in confusion; he’d never been asked to prove himself before and definitely not to Alex of all people. He wasn’t entirely sure what his former love was asking but he was fairly certain he could bullshit his way around it somehow.

“Alex” Michael started again.

“Is this really how it ends?” Alex asked. “You said we were cosmic; written in the stars”

“And you said… sometimes the World ends with a whimper”

Alex reached for Michael and grasped the front of his jacket, pulled him close to rest his forehead against his.

“You are my world” Alex whispered.

“And you were mine” Michael whispered in response. He took a deep breath and started to pull away but Alex held him close.

“Prove it” Alex hissed again.

“How?” Michael shrugged his shoulders in defeat.

Alex reached down, grasped Michael’s hand and placed it over his heart as he stared into Michael’s eyes, tears still brimming in his own.

“Show me” Alex begged “show me you don’t love me anymore”

His words caused tears to form in Michael’s eyes. Had it really come to this? He continued to hold Alex’s gaze, eyes searching for the uncertainty but he looked determined. Michael flexed his fingers but didn’t retract his hand.

He took a deep breath as he closed his eyes then slowly nodded his head.

“If that’s what you need” Michael whispered.

“I do” Alex replied.

Michael swallowed and flexed his fingers again. He pressed his hand flat upon Alex’s chest; could feel his heart beating, smell the alcohol on his breath, see the tears on his lashes. They stared into each other’s eyes as Michael’s hand began to glow but Alex kept his over Michael’s, hiding the glow should anyone happen by.
The connection opened between them and Michael could see into Alex’s heart. Their first kiss at the UFO Museum filled his mind and he was forced to fight back.

He filled his mind with the memory of Jesse Manes wielding a hammer, of himself trying to break into his mother’s cell, then he sought Maria. He showed Alex every moment he’d spent with her over the past few months. He knew what memories would hurt Alex the most and he set them all upon him at once.

Alex pulled away, breaking the connection. He looked up as Michael shoved his hand into his pocket. They stared at each other but neither said a word. Alex’s tears had all dried up, his voice was strong with not even the tiniest slur of his earlier drinking.

“Thank you” he said as he reached into his pocket and pulled out his phone.

Michael observed in silence as Alex called for a cab. He didn’t walk away though, just continued to watch Alex. The minutes ticked away until the yellow cab pulled into the parking lot.

He watched as Alex climbed in and spoke to the driver. Alex never once looked back at Michael yet he stayed, watching, until the car and Alex were long gone.

Michael made his way back inside and over to the bar. Maria appeared and poured him a drink. He hated himself for what he’d just done so the alcohol was a welcome distraction; now that they were officially sleeping together, she didn’t threaten to call in his bar tab but he wasn’t dumb enough to log too many in case she changed her mind.

“It’s not easy,” she said to him.

“What’s not?” Michael sipped his drink.

“Seeing him like that”

“He called for a ride; didn’t seem to want me around”

“He’ll come ‘round” she petted Michael’s hand “I mean high school was ten years ago’”

“Yeah; it was”

“Who holds on to a high school crush that long anyway?”

“Yeah, who does?”

But he knew the answer… and it wasn’t just Max Evans. He didn’t know why he didn’t tell her the truth. Maybe it was just easier this way. Maybe he thought that if he kept lying to himself, it would eventually get easier.
Michael didn’t see Alex the following day or night; not that he was surprised by this. After their moment outside the Wild Pony then his cruel attempt to force Alex to move on, he wasn’t expecting to see him anytime soon.

The most difficult part was knowing he’d opened a connection between them, one that could kick in at any given moment. He’d never done anything like it before, hoped to never have to do it again. He was going to have to keep his emotions in check for the next few days if he wanted to keep up the ruse.

Not that it was all a ruse; he did care for Maria very deeply and he needed to focus on that. He looked around the bar, eyes observing the patrons.

Maria appeared at his side and he wrapped his arms around her, pulling her into a hug and placed a kiss on her cheek. Her laugh was infectious and brought a smile to his lips.

A jolt of euphoria washed over him and he gasped, hand immediately flew to his heart. He closed his eyes and felt Alex’s laughter reverberating through him.

“You okay?” Maria asked as she brushed his curls back from his face.

“Yeah” he smiled “I’m… fine”

“Good, you seemed distracted last night”

“Nah, nothing to worry about”

“Whiskey or tequila?”

“You know, I might pass” he told her as he slipped off the bar stool. “Gonna head back to the junkyard and catch up on some sleep”

“Oh”

He could hear the disappointment in her voice, assured her he was just tired then he took his leave. Once he was behind the wheel of his car, he headed in the opposite direction of his airstream. He drove very slowly down the street as he passed Alex’s place but the lights were off and his car wasn’t there. A sigh escaped his lips; Michael knew it was none of his business anymore but that didn’t stop him worrying.

For ten years he’d worried about him and his fear had come true. Alex had come home injured… it was a small miracle he’d come home at all. He couldn’t just flip a switch and turn it all off; despite Alex being back almost a year, he still awoke in a cold sweat to nightmares of Alex being killed in
He turned the truck around as he decided to head back to the airstream but he’d swing past Valenti’s first… just to be sure Alex wasn’t alone. Michael was driving past the closed Crashdown when he saw them.

Max, Liz, Kyle and Alex were at a booth by the window. Liz was talking very animatedly and the three men around her laughed. Michael reached up, placed his hand over his heart and felt Alex’s laughter. Through the window, he watched as Alex subconsciously placed his hand over his own heart. Michael gasped; Alex looked up and their eyes locked.

Michael put his foot down and took off down the street, away from the cafe and back to the Wild Pony. Maria didn’t question his return but he also went very heavy on his drinking that night.

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He didn’t sleep much that night; tossing and turning, unable to get comfortable on the unfamiliar bed. Michael was impressed that Maria was able to sleep through his restlessness.

He’d not dreamed like that before. Each time he closed his eyes, he was overcome with a feeling of fear and uncertainty. He didn’t know where he was or why he was there. When he tried to sleep, the walls felt like they were closing in on him.

At first he thought it was an old nightmare resurfacing. As a child, he’d sometimes dreamed of the night they’d been found wandering the desert but even in those dreams, Max and Isobel had been by his side.

This time it was different; he was alone and restrained in the back of a van. The next time he awoke after being in a small dark room. Every time he closed his eyes, the uncertainty grew along with his fear.

By morning, he was practically curled in a ball at the edge of the bed. His eyes weren’t closed for that just made it worse and when Maria finally awoke, asked what was wrong, he couldn’t speak… like a gag was preventing him from communicating.

He ran out while Maria was in the shower and jumped in his truck, drove straight to his airstream and buried himself under the comfort of his bed. When he closed his eyes now, he didn’t see or feel anything; he was finally able to sleep.

When he woke in the mid afternoon, he could speak but there was no one to talk to.

Michael was tempted to reach out to Alex but after seeing him so happy with friends at the Crashdown, he didn’t want to project his own fears onto him. Alex had been through enough and
Michael needed him to believe it was over between them.

Michael spent the entire afternoon in his airstream, fighting a constant battle with himself. His hand kept moving to his chest, his heart. The connection was there; he could feel it, could access it but he knew it was best not to. He couldn’t risk sending his emotions back to Alex, not after he’d fought so hard to push him away.

He reached for a bottle of acetone and downed the entire thing. When he nodded off to sleep, he dreamed of Alex. The brave soldier was having a standoff with his father over Michael which caused him to snap awake. He reached for the phone and called Max but hung up before he could answer.

Half an hour later there was a loud knocking at his door and he shouted for whoever was there to ‘go away and leave him alone’ but Max Evans wasn’t one to follow orders. Max practically kicked the door down and launched into a lecture over the current state of Michael’s life. For someone who’d been dead a month ago, Max was as self-righteous as ever.

Michael crawled out of bed, braced for an argument but Max appeared to take one look at him and his sympathetic side kicked in. They moved outside to the firepit and Michael collapsed from exhaustion.

“You look like hell” Max told him.

“Feel like it too” Michael confessed.

“You have to curb your drinking”

“I’m not hungover, Max” he snapped.

“Then what? What’s drained you like this?”

Michael sighed and buried his head in his hands.

“Is it always like this?” Michael asked him.

“Is what like what?” Max frowned “Michael, what did you do?”

He ran his hands through his curls and sighed.

“I… I…” he couldn’t really put it into words so he flexed his hand a few times while staring down at it, remembering the way it glowed against Alex’s chest. “The handprint, the connection”

Max frowned as he moved towards Michael, sat down beside him.
“You…” Max didn’t know what to say “you hand-printed Maria?”

“What?” He looked up, appalled “no! Alex”

“Oh Michael”

“Don’t ‘oh Michael’ me… Just tell me what to expect… It doesn’t feel right”

“What doesn’t feel right?”

“Me! I don’t feel right… I can’t… I haven’t slept; I keep having nightmares”

“What kind of nightmares?”

“Images, feelings… a dark room; pain” he closed his eyes “loud yelling”

Michael watched as Max frowned again and he realized Max had no idea what he was talking about.

“You’ve never done that before, Michael” Max started “so why now?”

“Alex asked me to” he shrugged, wanting to appear like he didn’t care. He couldn’t tell Max of the way Alex had looked at him, pleaded with him.

“Are you still… in love with him?”

“I will always love him, Max, but we can’t be together… not after… everything”

“So you showed him as much?”

“I… showed him enough”

Max slowly reached out and placed his hand upon Michael’s arm.

“Why did you do it?” He asked “you’ve never…”

“He asked” Michael whispered “and I… couldn’t… didn’t want to say no”

“Michael-”

“I thought it was the right thing to do; for both of us. He knows I’m… that Maria… I just wanted him to move on”

“So you formed a psychic bond with him?”

“To show him… show him what he needed to see… but it’s not working, not the way it should”

“We don’t know how it should work. The connection between me and Liz was different to the psychic link she got from Noah” he paused “and if you were purposely trying to project a lie”

“I wasn’t! Not… entirely”

“Michael, I get it, okay? But you shouldn’t mess with your powers like that. What if you caused permanent damage?”
“Yeah, wouldn’t want either of us to be any more fucked up than we already are”
“You know what I mean”

Michael sighed in agreement.
“I keep having weird dreams” he admitted “about Alex and his dad”
“Maybe you unintentionally opened up something in Alex’s heart or his mind?”
“Is that even possible?”
“We don’t know what we’re capable of”
“Could I be… is there a chance I’m like invading his dreams? His nightmares?”
“I don’t… I don’t know” Max shrugged, helplessly.

Michael reached up and rubbed the bridge of his nose, a headache forming.
“I think I need to sleep it off”
“The connection fades after a few days, just try to hold out”
“And the dreams? Have you ever…?”
“No, I uh can’t explain that”
“Thanks uh for coming to check on me”
“You want me to stay a bit longer?”
Michael nodded his head but couldn’t say the word aloud. Max understood.

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“No!”

Michael didn’t realize he was yelling in his sleep; he tossed and turned, kicked the sheets which were a tangled mess about his body until he felt a hand on his shoulder shaking him awake. His eyes flew open and he found himself staring into Max’s worried, concerned eyes.

He didn’t even hesitate to throw his arms around him; his own heart was racing as he clung to Max with tears streaming down his cheeks. It was a struggle in itself to draw breath but he felt himself calming when Max held him and told him it was okay.
“It’s just a dream, Michael” Max tried to reassure him.

“Was it?” Michael panted “it felt… real”

“What did you see?”

“I felt pain… it was dark but it hurt; like someone was beating me and… and…”

“It’s alright; you’re safe here”

“What’s happening to me, Max?”

“I don’t know but maybe we need to talk to Alex?”

“No! I can’t… Not while… not until this… the handprint fades”

“Michael-”

“I can’t be around him, Max. I can’t… It… hurts too much”

“It’s okay, it’s okay”

Max held onto Michael until he fell asleep again and stayed up all night, watching over him, counting the times he screamed or cried in his sleep. In the morning when Michael couldn’t take anymore, he looked at Max with fear in his eyes and asked for his help.

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The only solution was the simplest one; they climbed into Michael’s truck, Max behind the wheel, and headed to find Alex. When they pulled up outside his place, Kyle was loudly bashing on the front door; he almost appeared relieved to see them.

“Kyle?” Max asked. “What are you doing here?”

“Looking for Alex, obviously… you?” He replied.

“Same”

“What’s he doing here?” Kyle narrowed his eyes at Michael who looked away. He wasn’t in the right headspace to deal with Kyle.

“Is Alex not answering?” Max tried to shift the conversation.

“He blew me off last night” Kyle confessed “no explanation or even a text and he hasn’t been answering my calls… kept trying all day yesterday and everything but he won’t come to the door either”
Michael knew that was very un-Alex-like behavior but he wasn’t going to admit he was worried. He stared at the front door until it burst open. Max started to rouse on him but Kyle simply ran inside and straight to Alex’s bedroom. Michael didn’t voice how much it bothered him that Kyle knew the way to Alex’s room.

Max appeared hesitant to enter Alex’s home uninvited but he followed Michael all the same. He reached for his cell phone when he saw the state of the living room.

Kyle reappeared a moment later, he looked to be in a state of shock. He didn’t say a word though and pressed on. Kyle yelled from the kitchen.

Michael and Max joined him; saw the broken glass and the blood. Both Michael and Kyle exchanged a look while Max began to dial a number.

Michael used his powers to knock the phone from his grasp.

“Michael!” Max yelled.

“Don’t” Michael argued.

“I have to call it in; there’s signs of a break in, blood on the door and evidence of a struggle”

“But… what if it’s alien related?”

“Guerin’s right” Kyle added “what if this is Project Shepherd related? We can’t get the sheriff in on this”

“You mean your mother?” Max asked him.

“Any law enforcement is too risky” Kyle argued.

“So Alex is missing and you don’t think we should report it?”

Max was talking to Kyle but his gaze was fixed upon Michael, whose eyes were closed and his hand was trembling.

“Michael?” Max hurried to his side, put his arm around him.

“What’s wrong with him?” Kyle couldn’t switch off the Doctor part of his brain.

“He’s been… experimenting with his powers” Max admitted “and its draining him”

“I can feel him, Max” Michael said.

“Is he hurt? Is he in danger?”

Michael squeezed his eyes tighter and pressed his hand to his chest. He opened them a moment later, out of breath and collapsed in Max’s arms.
“He’s… He’s… angry” he gasped.

“Okay, what the hell is going on?” Kyle demanded to know.

Max held Michael as he looked, helplessly, at Kyle.

“Michael used his powers on Alex” he confessed. Kyle took an angry step forward but Max held a hand out to stop him. “He opened a connection between them; we think he can sense him”

“So where is he?” Kyle asked.

Michael shook his head from side to side.

“I can’t tell” he was breathing very heavily “but I think he’s with his father”

He scrunched his eyes closed and tried to concentrate.

“I think I can hear Jesse Manes” he added.

“Are you sure?”

“Believe me, his voice isn’t one I’m likely to forget”

Max helped Michael into a chair then looked to Kyle for help.

“Well I guess that means there’s no crime?” Max shrugged “if he’s with his dad”

“Not if he was taken against his will” Kyle shot.

“We can’t call it in if its Project Shepherd related but if Jesse Manes has him, we have no proof that Alex isn’t there of his own volition”

“Alex would never help his father; not after Ca… after everything”

“There’s nothing we can do without proof”

“I can get the proof” Michael spoke up, eyes still closed; pain evident on his face.

“Michael, don’t push yourself too hard” Max gasped.

“I have to; for Alex”

But try as he might, nothing happened. He tried to connect, to reach out, to sense or feel him but there was nothing. Kyle refused to leave but went so far as to call Jesse Manes and ask if he’d seen Alex recently. His response was vague enough to be believable which sent them back to square one.

Kyle chose to stay, clean up and search for any evidence as to where Alex may have gone. Michael
reluctantly went home with Max where he spent the afternoon trying to reconnect with Alex.

By early evening Max was beyond concerned for Michael so he called Isobel for help. She took one look at Michael and immediately rounded on both of them for not including her sooner. Isobel sat down beside Michael and took hold of his hand. She was going to attempt to use the connection to reach out to Alex.

They both closed their eyes and Isobel used her abilities to venture into Michael’s mind. Together they sought to find a way through the psychic bond to find Alex.

Michael awoke on the floor with a pounding in his head that wouldn’t stop; Isobel’s nose was bleeding. Max was by their side in a flash, offering acetone to Isobel but Michael waved him off.

Despite Max’s insistence they stop, both Michael and Isobel refused. They tried again yet still woke up on the living room floor. The pain coursing through both of them was what led them to call it a night yet Michael still tried to reach out to Alex.

He found it disconcerting that he couldn’t feel him. The connection was there and it was strong. They had a psychic bond so why wasn’t it working?

When Max left to escort Isobel to her car, no doubt to reassure himself that she was okay and for them to talk about Michael without him hearing, he tried one more time.

The pain was intense; his hands were bound and he couldn’t move but he could see Jesse Manes circling him. The determination that enveloped him was strong and he pressed his hand to his heart, desperate to see and possibly hear more.

Jesse’s lips were moving but Michael couldn’t understand the words, maybe Alex wasn’t listening.

When Jesse backhanded him; Michael felt it and his other hand shot up to massage his stinging cheek.

“You’re pathetic, dad” Alex spat.

Jesse’s voice still didn’t register but Michael could feel Alex’s words.

“Do whatever you want to me, he won’t come for me”

Jesse’s hand in Alex’s hair hurt Michael to the roots of his curls but his voice was still distorted.

“Guerin doesn’t love me as much as you think” Alex spat “he’s moved on; he won’t risk his life for mine and I wouldn’t let him anyway”

A single blow to the side of Alex’s head broke the connection and Michael came to in a pool of his
own vomit. He sat up, coughing and dry retching as Max returned.

He was still coughing when Max forced the bottle into his hand then raised it to his lips. Michael hated to admit that it helped.

“Michael, what happened?” Max asked him.

“Jesse Manes has Alex” he explained “and he’s using him as bait”

“Bait for what?”

“Me”

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They argued well into the night; Max even called Isobel back and the three stayed up until the early hours. This suited Michael as he didn’t want to close his eyes from fear of the unpredictable connection. A part of him wanted to see Alex, to know he was okay but he feared not connecting with him. What exactly was Jesse doing to his son to sever the connection he likely didn’t know they had.

“How do you even know it’s real?” Max asked for the umpteenth time.

“I just do” Michael argued.

“It could be a trick” Isobel tried to stay level headed.

“You can’t make a judgement call, Michael” Max added “you’re not in the right headspace”

“Max is right, you’re… not impartial… because of the psychic bond”

Michael sighed and rubbed his forehead.

“Psychic bond or not, I can’t just sit here and do nothing” Michael snapped.

“You said yourself, Master Sergeant Manes is using him as bait which means he’s setting a trap… a trap for us” Isobel paused.

“Us?”

“You’ll just go running in there half cocked and we’ll have to go in after you then Jesse will have all three of us”

“Then what do you suggest?” Michael shouted, his head still pounding.
Max and Isobel exchanged nervous looks.

“Alex is with his father” Max replied “there’s no crime in that… your handprint connection might not even be right; you said yourself you projected a lie… what if it’s manifesting the lie back to you?”

“I know what I saw, what I felt”

“You’re with Maria now”

“What difference does that make?” Michael leaped to his feet in anger. He turned to Max “what if it was Jenna Cameron he was holding captive? Would you leave her to rot because you’re not sleeping with her anymore?”

“That’s not the same”

“It’s exactly the same thing”

It was 4am when Max’s phone started to ring. They all peered at the caller ID but weren’t surprised to see Kyle’s name on the screen. Michael used his powers to snatch the phone from Max and answered it on speaker.

“Valenti?” Michael greeted him.

“Guerin?” Kyle sounded confused “I thought I called Evans”

“You’ve got all three of us” Max spoke up.

“I couldn’t sleep so I went back to Alex’s; he’s still not here,” Kyle said to them “but uh there is a note”

“A note?” Max asked.

“Well, more like a message”

A picture message lit up the screen. Max touched it to open it and all three stared at the image Kyle had sent. It was very succinct.

A piece of paper consisting of the coordinates of Caulfield Prison, an image of an alien wearing a cowboy hat and the words ‘an eye for an eye’ typed across the bottom.

“Where are you guys?” Kyle asked.

“At Max’s” Isobel told him.

“I’ll be there in ten”
The call ended and Michael continued to stare at the picture Kyle had sent through. Jesse was pissed about the destruction of Caulfield and clearly wanted new aliens to experiment on.

“We can’t turn ourselves in to Jesse Manes” Isobel insisted.

“We can’t leave Alex with him either” Michael argued.

“Alex is his son, he’s not going to hurt him”

Michael couldn’t hold back a derisive laugh.

“Do you even hear yourselves?” He spat “the guy smashed my hand”

“You’re not his son”

Michael sighed.

“He was going for Alex and I got in the way… trying to protect him”

He sank back down on the couch and buried his face in his hands. Yet again Max and Isobel exchanged a look; Michael had never shared that tidbit of information with them. Ten years ago, Michael had stood between Jesse and Alex… and now Jesse was banking on him doing the same.

When Kyle arrived, he looked as tired as they all felt yet not one of them even considered going to bed. The debate started again once Michael told Kyle what he’d seen yet he was very surprised when Kyle didn’t exactly side with him.

The doctor was in agreement that they needed to find a way to get Alex away from his father, free of wherever he was being held yet he also understood the risk of Michael, Max and Isobel running off and getting caught themselves.

“Jesse Manes has known about us for years” Isobel stated “he obviously never intended to hurt us”

“But he had hundreds of other aliens to torture and experiment on” Kyle reasoned “our visit to Caulfield took that away from him so now he has to start over”

“He must know we have abilities” Max added “knows he can’t take us by force so he wants us to go to him”

“I can’t leave Alex” Michael argued “not with him to… I can feel it… What Manes is doing to him and… we have to stop it”

“I doubt the Master Sergeant knows about the psychic bond; maybe you can get word to Alex somehow?” Kyle suggested.

“I’ve tried… it doesn’t seem to work”
“Maybe he’s found a way to block your abilities…” Kyle pondered “remember that gate you couldn’t open at Caulfield?”

“So Alex is being held somewhere we can’t use our powers to break him out of” Michael muttered “great”

“Michael, no!” Isobel exclaimed. “You can’t”

“I have to, Is” Michael reached for her hand “you once asked me if there was anyone I’d risk everything to save” he paused as he stared into her eyes “it’s always been him”

“But you’re not even together anymore,” Kyle said.

“That doesn’t mean I ever stopped caring about him” Michael added “isn’t he your friend? Don’t you want to help him?”

“Of course I do but…” he paused, eyes sought Isobel’s then Max’s “at what cost? Handing the three of you over to be tortured and experimented on? You saw what they’d done to the others like you at Caulfield. Could you really sacrifice yourself to fifty, seventy years of torture at Jesse Manes’s hands?”

When Michael looked up at him, Kyle could see the tears in his eyes.

“I can’t do nothing,” he whispered “I’ve hurt him enough already”

“Look, it’s likely Manes doesn’t even know about the connection which means as far as he knows… none of you are even aware Alex is missing… Let me go talk to Manes”

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The plan wasn’t even much of a plan but they were in agreement that Kyle was their best option. Max and Isobel were too trusting though and sent him on his way, alone, believing he was safer that way. Kyle had known Jesse Manes his entire life, they wanted to believe he wouldn’t hurt him. Of course Michael was the only one who knew Jesse had shot Kyle as revenge for what happened at Caulfield.

Michael did the only logical thing; he followed Kyle.

He stole a car so Kyle wouldn’t recognize his truck and try to stop him. They drove a ways out of town to an old, disused base. Kyle got out of his car then walked out of sight.

Michael had to carefully follow him, trying to remain out of sight. He watched as Kyle moved some debris to reveal a hatch then he knocked very loudly to announce his arrival. Kyle reached down, placed his hand on a scanner and the hatch opened for him.
Kyle looked around then climbed down into the hatch. Michael hurried forward and caught it with his powers before it could close him out.

There was no time to waste; he slipped inside and dropped to the base of the ladder where he was immediately confronted with the sight of Jesse holding a gun to Kyle’s head.

“Great” he muttered.

“Guerin, what the hell?” Kyle sounded furious but that could be due to the gun pressed into his temple.

“Is Alex even here?” Michael spat.

“I would say I’m disappointed in you, Kyle” Jesse said “but all I wanted was the alien to voluntarily turn himself in which is basically what you’ve done for me”

“So you’re just going to let me walk out of here then?” Kyle asked.

“Not yet” Jesse replied.

“You’re not leaving here without Alex, Valenti” Michael said to him.

“Why are you just standing there?” Kyle shouted at Michael. “Melt his brain with your powers!”

“I’m trying” Michael muttered.

For some reason, the second the hatch had closed, his powers were failing him. He even placed his hand to his heart but couldn’t feel Alex’s presence. Perhaps that’s why their connection was so intermittent.

“If he can’t hurt you” Kyle asked “maybe I’m not the best hostage to use as leverage here?”

“Shut up, Valenti” Michael hissed.

Jesse laughed.

“He’s right, though; you can shoot him for all I care,” Michael said with a shrug.

“On the table” Jesse nodded to a pair of advanced looking handcuffs. “Put them on”

Michael rolled his eyes but his heart was pounding. They weren’t getting anywhere; he couldn’t connect to Alex, had no idea where he was or if he was hurt. He looked down at the cuffs and reluctantly picked them up.
Maybe there was a way he and Kyle could overpower Jesse and somehow put the cuffs on him.

“Do it” Jesse hissed “or I’ll shoot”

“Yeah… Still not much incentive” Michael replied with a shrug.

Jesse rolled his eyes, turned the gun toward Michael and pulled the trigger. The bullet hit the ground mere millimeters from the toe of Michael’s boot.

“The next one goes in your shin” Jesse snapped. “Or your ankle”

Michael’s eyes flickered from Jesse’s fierce gaze to the cuffs in his hand and back again. He was tempted to goad him into shooting again; there couldn’t be that many bullets in the chamber so surely he could provoke him enough to waste more.

Jesse turned the gun back on Kyle. Michael sighed and slowly slid his hand into one of the cuffs then he glanced up, locked eyes with Jesse.

“Just… tell me you haven’t hurt him” Michael’s heart was pounding as he waited for an answer.

Jesse scoffed.

“Where is Alex?” Michael asked him “is he here? Is he hurt?”

“Put the cuffs on” Jesse snapped. “And you can see him”

He continued to glare at Jesse; he hated that Jesse had all the cards. Michael couldn’t use his powers, Jesse had a gun and he had Alex plus he was holding Kyle right now. He sighed then reluctantly slipped the other cuff around his wrist.

Both cuffs locked into place, the light changed from green to red and he couldn’t move either wrist.

Jesse laughed and Michael narrowed his eyes in anger. The look of sympathy on Kyle’s face did little to assure Michael either. He hated this; he needed to get out of here with Alex and Kyle, had to get them all away from Jesse Manes.

Michael was told to move yet he didn’t. He was always going to defy Jesse, no matter what. Jesse reached into his pocket, pulling out a syringe and plunged it into Kyle’s neck. Michael watched in horror as Kyle slumped to the ground.
“Did you just…?” Michael started.

“He’ll be fine” Jesse assured him, nonplussed. “Just didn’t want him getting in my way”

“You sick bastard”

Jesse turned the gun on Michael again then instructed him to walk but Michael still didn’t budge. He opened a compartment, placed his hand upon the scanner and the wall opened to reveal a corridor. He moved closer, grabbed Michael by the scruff of his shirt, pushed him through the door and along the corridor until they reached another door. Jesse punched in a series of numbers on the keypad and the door opened.

The first thing Michael’s eyes fell upon was Alex who was tied to a chair. Their eyes locked and Michael watched as a series of emotions crossed Alex’s gaze.

In the blink of an eye, Alex experienced love then admiration followed by disappointment. Jesse shoved Michael into the room and onto his knees where he pressed the gun into the back of Michael’s head.

“Dad!” Alex cried as tears filled his eyes “don’t! You promised”

“And you lied to me” Jesse hissed “said he wouldn’t come for you but he did… seems the alien does still care about you”

Michael glared up at Jesse but the soldier wasn’t looking down at him. He dared to move closer to Alex and begin untying his wrists.

“I didn’t tell you to do that” Jesse hissed at him.

“Bite me” Michael snapped but he did stop trying to break through the zip ties.

He reached up with his restrained hands tried to touch Alex’s shoulder as he looked into his eyes.

“You shouldn’t have come for me, Guerin” Alex whispered to him.

“No son, that’s what Kyle’s here for”

“Kyle?”
“Your dad knocked him out” Michael told him.

“He’ll be fine” Jesse informed them “once he comes to, you can both go and leave the alien to me”

“You’re crazy to believe that’s what’s going to happen” Alex argued.

“My plan was simple and effective; I wanted the alien to come to me and you were the perfect bait… and he’s here voluntarily”

“Bullshit” Michael snapped.

“You came here off your own bat”

“I came here for Alex” Michael insisted, his heart pounding “to… to make sure you weren’t hurting him”

“Guerin-” Alex protested.

“So let him go” Michael said through gritted teeth.

Jesse laughed.

“In due time” he said to them. “I think we’ve still got a few moments before Valenti wakes up”

“How do you know he hasn’t already and gone for help?” Alex asked.

A brief look of fear caused Jesse’s eyes to widen but he covered his panic by cocking his gun. He stepped back, pushed the door closed and disappeared.

Alone in the cell, just the two of them, Michael immediately started pulling on the zipties at Alex’s wrist. He yanked hard enough to snap the tie and free Alex’s left wrist. No longer restrained, the first thing he did was reach for Michael and place his hand upon his cheek.

“You weren’t supposed to come” Alex hissed, a hint of sadness in his voice “you would’ve been safe”

“I couldn’t risk it”

“Risk what?”

“The possibility that he was hurting you”

“Guerin-”
They heard the keypad and the door opened again. This time Jesse deposited Kyle on the floor of the cell.

“He’ll waken soon then you’ll leave” Jesse told Alex.

“I am not leaving here without Guerin”

“But you have to, son. You see, I won...the alien is here with me but you can’t tell anyone without exposing his existence”

“Dad, don't do this!”

“Why not? Because he manipulated you? Used you, Targeted you… Took advantage of you”

“He never did any of those things”

“Of course he did!”

“Dad!”

Jesse kept the gun pointed at Kyle while he narrowed his eyes at Alex.

“Why couldn’t you have been more like your brothers?” He sighed “you have too much of your mother in you”

“You can’t do this” Alex insisted.

“You should’ve thought of that before you went sticking your noses in at Caulfield. The three of you destroyed years of research and cost us all our test subjects”

“They weren’t subjects; they were human beings”

“They were not human”

When Kyle began to stir, Jesse looked away and Michael snapped the tie on Alex’s other wrist. He watched as Kyle lashed out and kicked Jesse’s knee. It was enough for Michael to launch himself at the soldier but Kyle was still drugged and Michael’s hands were restrained.

Jesse picked up the gun and pointed it firmly at Michael.

“Kyle, Alex” Jesse’s voice was firm and angry “you’re both going to leave and neither of you will return”

“You can’t-”

“I will move the alien elsewhere so no one will find him… and he won’t give me any grief because he knows all too well what I’m capable of”

“We’re not going anywhere without him” Alex insisted.

“Then you leave me no other choice but to shoot him and dissect his corpse”
Jesse cocked the gun, pointed it directly at Michael and pulled the trigger.

Time appeared to freeze, move in slow motion as Michael couldn’t use his powers to stop the bullet that was moving towards him.

The one thing that could stop it was Alex; he didn’t hesitate. The second his father raised the gun, Alex was on his feet. As the shot rang out, he threw himself in front of Michael.

The bullet hit quickly and Alex collapsed but Michael was there to catch him as blood seeped from his clothes.

“Alex!” Michael screamed “Alex, no… no… no… please?”

He carefully managed to lie him down, his actions still restricted by his bound hands but Kyle was by his side now and was applying pressure to the wound.

“Master Sergeant?” Kyle called.

They both looked up and realized Jesse was gone. The coward had fled as soon as he’d pulled the trigger.

“Alex?” Michael’s eyes were filled with tears. “Alex, please? Please be okay”

“Guerin-” Alex’s voice was barely audible.

“Get these things off me!” Michael yelled at Kyle who looked at the cuffs and frowned.

“I… I don’t know how” he confessed. “Keep pressing the wound; there has to be a med kit or something around here. We can’t risk moving him”

Kyle took off and ran from the room, leaving Michael with Alex who was slipping in and out of consciousness. He tried to keep his hand in place but it was hard.

“Alex, please, I need you to be okay” he whispered “I can’t… I can’t do this without you. I was a fool to think I ever could. You’re the best thing to ever happen to me and I never should have thrown that away” he leaned down and kissed his forehead. “I was so self centered in trying to make myself be something I’m not that I let you slip away… because I pushed you away and I never should’ve done that”
Michael pressed another kiss to Alex’s cheek.

“I know I hurt you and I’m so, so sorry” he paused, “I love you, Alex. I always have… There’s never been anyone else. You’re my person and I love you… I never meant to hurt you… And I… I can’t lose you; not now and not like this! Why would you do something so stupid?”

“Because I…” Alex coughed “I…”

Michael held back a breath, waiting for Alex to say anything at all.

“Guerin!” Kyle shouted from the other room “help arrived!”

Michael looked up to see Kyle hurrying into the room with Max and Isobel in tow.

“We thought you’d try something stupidly heroic-” Isobel started.

“Max! Help him!” Michael begged.

Max didn’t hesitate to drop to his knees; he ripped Alex’s shirt open to reveal the bullet wound and the pool of blood beside the glowing handprint.

“Max! Please?”

Tears were rolling down Michael’s cheeks. This was taking too long, Alex was slipping further away as his body went limp and Michael’s entire World turned cold and dark.

“Max! Hurry!” Michael pleaded.

“I… I don’t think I should” Max replied. “We don’t know what’ll happen if we… mix handprints”

“Then get these off me!” Michael hissed.

Max placed his hand on the cuff and seconds later the mechanism overheated, the cuffs fell to the ground and Michael immediately placed his hand over the bullet wound. He closed his eyes and concentrated.

He could barely feel Alex’s heartbeat but it was just enough for him to cling to, to connect to. He held on, allowing his feelings for Alex to form a bridge from his heart to Alex’s. Michael could feel the energy seeping from him; he wasn’t strong enough but he had to do this. He couldn’t lose him.

He was weakening but Alex wasn’t growing stronger. Tears were streaming down his face then he felt an intense boost of power and opened his eyes to see Isobel’s hand atop his; she had added her
strength to the connection. Max’s hand on Michael’s shoulder added another surge and he cried out as Alex’s eyes opened and he gasped.

Michael collapsed on the floor as Isobel reached for him but he shrugged her aside so he could see Kyle fretting. He tried to stretch his hand to touch Alex but he was too exhausted.

“Guerin?” Alex coughed as he struggled to sit up himself. Kyle was still fussing but Michael watched as Alex gently urged him aside then slowly tried to close the minor distance between himself and Michael, stretching his hand towards him.

Michael felt Alex’s hand grasp his and he let out a sob of relief.

“Alex?” He whispered.

“I’m okay” Alex replied equally as softly. “You saved me”

Alex moved even closer and Michael shifted away from both Max and Isobel as he struggled to sit up, reached for the front of Alex’s blood soaked shirt.

“You saved me” Alex whispered again as he wrapped his arms around Michael and held him close.

“I had to” Michael replied “because I… I can’t live without you. I love you, Alex”

“What about Maria?”

Michael heard Max ask Isobel followed by a gasp of pain as she elbowed him to shut up.

But he looked to both of them and at Kyle before he turned and held Alex’s gaze.

“She’s not you” Michael whispered “and I… never meant to hurt either of you”

Alex slowly reached up, placed his hand upon Michael’s cheek then leaned in to kiss him ever so gently.

“I love you too, Michael” Alex whispered.

Michael held back a sob but he could see tears in Alex’s eyes.

“I’m sorry my dad did this to you” Alex continued “I’m sorry he used me to get to you; I’m sorry for what he planned to do to you; I’m sorry he tried to shoot you-”
“Alex” Michael reached up and placed his hands on Alex’s face, cupping his cheeks. He pulled him close and pressed their foreheads together.

“This wasn’t your fault” he continued “and you don’t have to apologize for what he did”

“He wanted to hurt you” Alex argued “and he used me to do it”

“That doesn’t matter to me because I love you and you’re not accountable for what he does… You took a bullet for me, Alex”

“Of course I did; you’re my family”

Michael leaned in and kissed him. They each held the other close while exchanging tender kisses and by the time they parted, they were alone in the cell; Max, Isobel and Kyle had all vanished.

Alex gingerly climbed to his feet then held his hand to Michael, helped him up. Once on his feet, Michael reached out and placed his bloodied hand upon the glowing handprint on Alex’s chest.

They both closed their eyes and felt the connection linking them. Michael could feel the fear and longing radiating from Alex and he forced back more tears as Alex placed his hand on top of Michael’s and they held each other; both just feeling the others heart beating. Perfectly in sync with each other. Michael leaned in for one more kiss.

The couple leaned on each other as they moved down the hall and found Max, Kyle and Isobel standing in the bunker.

“What’s wrong?” Michael asked them.

“We’re locked in” Kyle replied.


“Max, Is?” Michael looked to his siblings.

Isobel shrugged.

“Jesse must’ve been watching the place” Max theorized “waited until we were inside then sealed us in”

“It’s a digital lock” Alex explained “I can crack it”

Michael helped Alex to the computer before moving to the table and sitting himself down, already
feeling drained. He watched as Alex booted up the screens and started typing on the keyboard.

No one said a word; the silence was awkward. Michael expected a lecture from Max for his recklessness; he expected one from Kyle for following him; he expected a stern comment from Isobel but none said a word.

They all knew what had happened; how close Michael had come to losing Alex but none dared to mention it.

Michael sat at the table, still trying to collect himself but every few minutes he’d find himself reaching to place his hand upon his chest. Across the room, Alex would do the same and they would both smile.

It took Alex longer than expected to crack the encryption but they all heard the lock. Max was the first to climb out in case Jesse was still lying in wait but there was no sign of the man.

He returned to the bunker and reached for Michael to help him. Michael was tempted to brush him aside but he saw Kyle moving to Alex’s side.

Once they were all free of the bunker and in the fresh air, they exchanged awkward glances.

“I’m gonna take Alex back to my place” Kyle told the group “make sure he’s okay… just in case anyone is looking for him later”

Kyle was looking directly at Michael. He knew exactly what the doctor was saying to him.

*

Michael climbed into Max’s jeep and promptly fell asleep. He awoke as the car pulled up before Max’s home and he allowed Isobel to help him inside. Max brought him acetone and he sipped it until he could feel his strength returning.

“Is healing always so draining?” Michael asked him.

“Michael…” Max began.

“I didn’t think it was going to work; I was… scared I was going to lose him”

“You’re strong, Michael, and… feeling love doesn’t make you weak”

“I don’t know what I would have done if he’d… if you hadn’t…”
“Of course we followed you, Michael” Isobel spoke up. “Love makes you do stupid things; makes everyone do dumb stuff”

“When it comes to him… I’ll always make bad decisions”

“And now you can change that; by making smart decisions”

“Isobel” Max tried to interrupt.

“Michael, you know what you have to do if you really and truly want to be with him”

Michael sighed before taking another sip.

“I don’t want to hurt her, Is” he confessed.

“But you don’t love her” Isobel reasoned “so tell her the truth; that your heart has always been his”

“I think she already knows”

“Maybe but you owe her the truth from your own mouth”

He knew she was right so once his strength had returned and he was able to walk without feeling dizzy, he climbed into his truck and drove to the Wild Pony.

The door wasn’t locked so he walked right in though the place wasn’t open yet. The bar was deserted except for Maria who was wiping down the tables. She looked up from the task and smiled at him but her expression shifted as she took in his disheveled appearance, the bloodstains on his shirt.

“Michael?” She frowned as she moved around from behind the bar.

“It’s not my blood” he promised her. “It’s… Alex’s”

She gasped in shock.

“Is he…?”

“He got into it with his father and…” he paused as tears filled his eyes “Maria?”

She reached for his hands and held them tightly.

“It’s okay” she whispered. “It’s okay”

“I’m sorry”
“Don’t be”

“It’s just him… It’s always been him”

“I know”

“I didn’t mean for… I never wanted to…”

Maria leaned in and kissed his cheek.

“He’s always loved you” she said to him “you both deserve to be happy”

“I’m sorry” he whispered.

“Don’t apologize for being in love”

“You deserve so much better than me”

“Go to Alex, Guerin” she whispered “and tell him how much you love him because he knows but he needs to hear it”

*

He stopped at the airstream to change his clothes and wash the blood from beneath his fingernails. Michael put on a clean shirt then jumped into his truck and headed to Kyle’s place.

Michael slowly made his way to the door and nervously knocked. It took several minutes before the door opened and Kyle greeted him. He couldn’t read the expression on his face.

“How is he?” Michael asked him.

“Still a bit shaken” Kyle admitted “but he’ll be okay in time”

“Can I… does he want to see me?”

Kyle stepped aside and held the door for Michael who slowly made his way inside. They didn’t say anything else as Michael followed Kyle’s lead until they reached a door. Kyle reached up and knocked.

“Alex?” He called through the closed door “you uh have a… gentleman caller”
Kyle turned and walked away so Michael reached out and opened the door. Alex was sitting on the bed in what appeared to be the guest bedroom, his prosthetic was on the bed beside him and he appeared to be wearing mismatched clothes.

“Well aren’t you a sight for sore eyes” Michael greeted him. “Nice outfit”

“Kyle has terrible fashion sense” Alex replied.

Michael stepped into the room but didn’t know if he should close the door or leave it open so he simply pushed it to. He looked at Alex and his heart swelled.

Alex reached up and placed his hand upon his chest, touching the handprint.

“I broke up with Maria” Michael blurted.

“Oh?” Alex frowned.

“I had to because she’s not you and I need you, Alex, I love you”

“Guerin-”

Michael reached up, pressed his hand to his heart and projected every loving feeling he could into the connection between them. Alex gasped, his eyes filled with tears.

“I love you, Alex” Michael said again as he started towards him. “I meant everything I said to you in the bunker. It’s always been you, Alex; I love you… I always have, since that day you tried to kiss me and opened my eyes to what had been right in front of me all along. I never should’ve pushed you away… But I thought I was protecting both of us… thought we’d be better off apart but we’re stronger together… I know we are”

“Guerin-”

“I know I hurt you and I’m sorry. I can say it was all in my head; that after Caulfield and my mother and Noah and Max… that it was all too much and I was looking for an easy way out but there is no easy way… Love is hard and messy and painful but it’s also… it’s what keeps me coming back to you. I will always come back to you because I can’t bear the idea of being without you”

“Guerin-”

“For like a minute today, I lost you and I didn’t think I’d get you back… and that thought scared me to the point I wanted to just curl up next to you and go with you”

“Guerin-”

“Love makes you do stupid things” Michael repeated Isobel’s words “like pushing away the people you love”
“Or taking a bullet for them?” Alex added when Michael paused.

“Why would you do that? Why would you risk your life for me?”

“Isn’t it obvious? Because all I’ve ever wanted to do is protect you”

“I just want you to be safe”

Alex nodded in understanding then he petted the bed beside him.

“Come here” he said.

Michael nodded his head and moved towards the bed. He kicked off his boots as Alex shifted across the mattress to make room for him. Michael climbed onto the bed and slid his arm around Alex to pull him into his embrace. He watched as Alex’s hand came to rest upon his chest.

Michael kissed his forehead then placed his hand over Alex’s. They held each other close, both feeling the beating of the other’s heart.

Two hearts beating as one.

“I love you, Michael” Alex whispered. “And I want to be with you for the rest of my life”

Michael choked back a response. For they both knew Alex’s life had ended today; if Max and Isobel hadn’t shown up when they had then the two of them wouldn’t be here now. Michael wouldn’t be holding Alex in his arms right now.

“You will be, Alex” Michael promised. “I’m never letting you go ever again”

“If my dad tries again to-“

“He won’t because you are mine and I will protect you, no matter what”

“I love you, Michael”

Michael pressed Alex’s hand to his chest, used the psychic bond to respond. Both had tears in their eyes. Neither wanted the link to ever be broken. Michael knew it never would because after all these years, it hadn’t weakened; had only grown stronger and it would continue to grow.
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