The Mistake

by BlueMaize

Summary

Fuelled by grief over the loss of Lou, a drunken night sees Spike fall into bed with Greg, Ed and Sam. His long held dream come true. The light of morning sees their night together labelled a mistake by Greg, one to be forgotten and buried for the sake of the team.

Three months later Spike is trapped in an abusive relationship, one which he thinks he deserves after being rejected by Greg, Ed and Sam. Can they wake up to the truth in time to save him?

Notes

So I decided this would be a one shot. But nearly 9000 words later it wasn't finished so I'm going with a short, three chapter fic instead. Warning for abuse, non-graphic rape and basically being not very nice to poor Spike.
Chapter 1

To say they’d had a lot to drink was an understatement as they staggered, stumbled and otherwise fell through Greg’s front door and into his hallway. Wordy has gone home to his family, Jules away for an old school friend’s wedding, so it was just the four of them. They decamped to Greg’s living room, collapsing on the couch.

Spike somehow wound up sandwiched between Ed and Greg, and Sam, who was last in, lowered himself to sit on the coffee table, blue eyes watching Spike intently.

Spike got distracted by the light on the ceiling. All bright and shiny. Maybe too bright. “Boss what wattage is that? ’s like a star.” He slurred his words a little, tipping his head to the side.

“What’s like a star Spike?” “The light… so bright. It rhymes.” His attention drifted to Sam, who was still staring at him. “What is it? Do I have something on my face? Is it sunburn?” he giggled.

“You’re kinda hot when you’re drunk.” Sam replied quietly. A hush fell across the room; calm before the storm. Spike frowned. “You think I’m hot?” Sam shrugged, looking from Greg to Ed. “What, you guys don’t? I’ve seen the way you look at him.”

Spike froze, not letting his gaze drift left or right. “Sure he’s hot. He’s our geek with combat skills.” Ed answered, stretching like a cat, back arched, his leg just touching Spike’s.

“He’s looks good in the cool pants.” Greg affirmed. “Really good.”

“What about you Spike?” Sam asked, voice low.

“Do I think I’m hot? I think I’m a little biased…” Spike replied, a teasing note to his voice.

“No. Do you think we’re hot Spikey?”

Spike waved his hand around magnanimously. “’s a rhetorical question. You guys are like the definition of…” Whatever else he was going to say was cut off when Sam, in a move reminiscent of a viper striking, landed on his knees in front of him, leaned in with hands on Spike’s thighs, and kissed him.

Spike was kissing him back before he registered the move and then Sam’s hand was behind his head, and he deepened the kiss, tongue teasing its way into Spike’s mouth. When he pulled back, lust in his eyes, they were both breathing heavily.

He tried to pull his thoughts into line. Was this really happening? Something he’d thought about idly, daydreamed about, a wish he’d pushed into the deepest recesses of his mind, labelled as fantasy.

A rough hand turned his head to the side, and Ed’s lips pressed to his. His mind, overwhelmed by the unexpected turn of events, distantly registered another set of hands unbuttoning his shirt and pulling his collar down, lips on his neck and collarbone, kissing, nipping at the sensitive skin of his throat. Greg.

Ed pulled back abruptly and Spike tried to follow him, limbs a little too uncoordinated to be as precise as Sam. Hands pulled him back, fingers unbuttoning the rest of his shirt and hands slipping under to tease his bare skin.

“Are we really doing this?” he asked, turning to see Ed fish a strip of condoms from his wallet. He
swallowed hard, turning to make eye contact with each of the men in turn, unable to deny the lust in each of their faces. He gave them a dazed smile as Sam pushed his shirt from his shoulders, then reached to untuck his own... yeah, he guessed they really were.

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“Last night... last night was a mistake. We draw a line under it. We forget it happened. We don’t bring it up again.” Greg’s words weighed heavily on Spike’s mind. And just like that, he was cast adrift.

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*Three months later*

He was late. Again. He tried to be unobtrusive as he slipped in the door, making a beeline for the locker room but a voice had him freeze halfway across the hall. “What time do you call this, Officer Scarlatti?” He turned to see Ed, coffee cup in hand, standing just outside the briefing room door.

“Um, sorry. My alarm...”

“You think I believe our tech specialist can’t work an alarm clock? Pull the other one Spike.”

Spike shrugged before offering a snide, almost insubordinate retort. “I overslept, sir.”

“If it happens again, you’ll find yourself up on report.” Words sharp enough to cut.

Spike restrained a sigh and forced himself to at least act contrite. “Sorry Ed. Won’t happen again.”

“Yeah. Go get changed. Full gear. We’re doing laps.”

He went to the locker room, glad to find it empty, and changed quickly, a hiss escaping him as the quick movement he used to shuck off his shirt aggravated his bruises. He paused just long enough to pop some pain pills into his mouth and swallowed them dry before hurrying to join the team. This day was going to be hell.

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“Again Spike.” Spike didn’t have enough energy to reply, just simply took off as directed, running another lap, knowing he had no chance of improving his time. Not today.

Ed had sent the rest of the team in, happy with their scores but he seemed to have a permanent frown where Spike was concerned.

When Spike eventually jogged to a stop, Ed, stop watch and clipboard in hand, didn’t acknowledge him at first.

“You feeling okay Spike?”

The question caught him off guard. “Um, sure. I’m fine.” He answered brightly, managing a tired smile that didn’t reach his eyes.

Sceptical blue eyes surveyed him. “Yeah? So do you want to tell me why you’re making slower times than you have since you started with SRU?”

It couldn’t be that bad, could it? The look on Ed’s face confirmed it. “Anything you want to tell me Spike?”
He made a concession and told Ed, if not the whole truth, at least not a total lie. “Um, I’ve been having a bit of trouble sleeping.”

“That all?”

“Sure, what else would there be?” He tried for bright but it came out more defensive than he’d meant it to.

Ed stared him down and it took a lot of effort to hold his composure in the face of such intimidation.

“Alright. Let’s head in.” Ed waited for Spike to catch up to him before he started walking towards the door. “Drinks in the Goose tonight.” He said conversationally. “Yeah… I kinda have…” “That wasn’t an invitation Spike. Be there.” There was no room for disagreement so Spike stayed silent, realising he’d have to put in an appearance.

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After a few drinks at the Goose, Sam dragged them to a nightclub, insistent that they were overdue the chance to let off some steam. Spike’s head was already pounding and the loud music drilled right through his skull. He found a cooler spot around a corner that was shielded from the acoustics and let himself lean against the wall.

“So here’s where you’re hiding.” He opened his eyes to see Sam leaning next to him. He’d put more effort into his outfit for the evening than Spike had, with a pair of figure hugging dark jeans and grey shirt that accented his blue eyes.

He had the remains of a bottle of beer in his hand which he drained before dropping it to the floor. “You look amazing you know.” Spike rolled his eyes, knowing he looked far from it. He did more than that when Sam leaned in and tried to kiss him. He shoved the sniper back, harder than he’d intended, panic flitting briefly through him. “Sam, no. We can’t do this.”

“I know what the boss said…”

“It’s not just that anymore…” Spike bit off his words before he could finish. It wasn’t something he wanted to tell. But Sam, while tipsy, was still his observant self. “Oh. You have someone.” More statement than question. He moved to put his back to the wall, turning his face away. Hiding what, Spike wasn’t sure. Disappointment, jealously, lust? Probably the latter. Maybe he’d been hoping for another one night stand. Spike didn’t deserve the other emotions. He’d been a mistake. On that they’d all agreed.

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He hadn’t had a free minute away from the team to make a call so instead had sent a long apologetic text explaining that he’d done his best but couldn’t get out of it. He didn’t get a reply and that set his stomach churning.

He returned to his basement room near two am, letting himself in with his key, staying quiet so as not to disturb his sleeping parents. He was looking forward to a night of undisturbed rest. He should have known better.

The lights were off everywhere but the bathroom, the diffuse glow illuminating the figure sitting on Spike’s couch. “You’re home.”

“Oh hey, you’re here. Yeah, I didn’t mean to be out so late but Greg was my ride and he was taking Sam home and Sam wanted to party. I kind of got waylaid.”
He was his typical verbose self but kept his words soft, trying to disguise the anxiety in his voice. His hand, still clutching his keys, shook slightly. “It happens. Don’t worry about it.” The figure stood, moved close, pressing himself against Spike’s still form. “Did you dance? Show off that body of yours.”

“Nn...no. I wasn’t in the mood.”

“So what did you do, while I was left to my own devices.” The words were friendly, only the slightest edge to them.

Spike shrugged in the gloom, trying to look nonchalant. “Drank a few beers and passed the time. Idle chit chat.”

“Your telling me a good looking guy like you didn’t get chatted up? Not once?”

“I’m not good looking like they are...” he winced when he heard the words spoken aloud.

“Like your team mates? Ed, Sam, Greg?” A hand ghosted across his face, mouth pressing against his neck. “Yeah, you’re right. I’ve seen their pictures. Looks wise, they really are a grade above. And not just looks I’m guessing. They’re faster, braver, stronger, smarter. You know, sometimes I wonder what I see in you.” Spike let his eyes close at the truth of the words, flashing back on the scorn in Ed’s voice at Spike’s running times that morning.

“But you have your own charms I suppose.” He licked a line along Spike’s chin towards his earlobe, biting the soft cartilage. “And you can make it up to me.” He whispered into Spike’s ear.

“Alec, please, I’m exhausted.”

“And whose fault is that? Who was out all night while I was sitting here alone?”

“I know. I’m sorry.” There was true contrition in his voice. “I know you are. So show me.” He moved to stand in front of Spike, hands on Spike’s shoulders exerting steady pressure until Spike dropped to his knees. He reached tired hands for Alec’s belt. “You’d better make it good.” There was the slightest hint of a threat, enough to make Spike shudder.

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Spike rose early, careful not to wake the sleeping man next to him. If he did he’d only be late again and Ed would hold true to his threat to put Spike on report, a first for Team One. He didn’t bother showering, knowing the hour was early enough he could get into work and shower there. They were on standby for team 3 today with one high risk arrest warrant to serve in the afternoon.

He slipped in unnoticed by anyone except the dispatcher who gave a knowing smile at Spike’s dishevelled appearance. The showers were deserted thankfully and he washed quickly, ignoring the catalogue of bruises new and old on his skin. Alec was careful, nothing visible to even the observant eye once Spike was dressed.

He needed to avoid questions today so he was careful to button his shirt and neaten his appearance before grabbing his laptop and setting up in the briefing room.

The others filed in later in the morning, Ed giving a smile at Spike’s effort to make up for the day before, even going so far as to praise him when Sam and Jules straggled in last minute. But Spike knew the truth. He was a mistake.

He was relieved that Ed didn’t suggest more laps and that instead Greg led Leah through some
negotiation practice. Spike got to play hostage while Sam was the subject, gun pressed close to Spike’s head. It put them uncomfortably close given Sam’s proposition the previous night. Uncomfortable from a more literal perspective for Spike as Sam’s hand on his back pressed against fresh bruises.

He shifted a few times, putting a slight bit of space between them but Sam seemed oblivious, closing the distance as he and Leah talked. Spike was relieved when Greg called an end to their practice, stiff from holding the same position for almost two hours.

They took a break for lunch before they were to head out to serve the warrant. Spike retreated to the locker room hoping he had some tylenol in his locker. He heard footsteps follow him in and turned to see Sam.

“I’m sorry if I made you uncomfortable last night.”

“It was nothing. Forget about it.” Spike replied, feeling tiredness etch its way across his face.

“So you’ll stop inching away from me every time I touch you?”

Something flashed across his face, some vestige of emotion, before he could clamp down on it. He forced an easy smile on his face to match his next words. “We’re good Sam, don’t worry about it.”

Sam nodded in acknowledgement of his words but he didn’t appear reassured. “You know you can talk to me, about anything? I mean, I’m not Lou, but I’m here for you if you need someone.” His words were awkward and stilted but earnest all the same and Spike had the urge to break down and tell him everything. But Greg walked in and the moment ended. “Come on guys. We’re going over the tac plan again while we eat.”

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Spike barely looked at him these days. Barely spoke. Rebuffed Greg’s attempts to talk, not just about Lou but anything not directly work related. His attitude had taken a nosedive, bordering on insubordination more than once. And physically… he glanced over the records for the previous two months and compared them to ones from a year ago. Spike’s times were slower, his accuracy was off. And it was getting worse. They were due a requalification in a little over a month and at this rate, Spike wasn’t going to make it.

The rest of the team had gone home after they’d successfully arrested the arms dealer Guns and Gangs had targeted. The sounds of the door sealing jerked his attention away from the numbers in front of him as Ed took a seat next to him.

“We need to talk about..”

“Spike, I know” Ed finished for him.

“I didn’t want to push the issue but we’re beyond that point now. If we had to requalify tomorrow, he mightn’t make the cut.” Greg laid it out in front of him, seeing in Ed’s face that it wasn’t a surprise.

“Counselling?” Ed suggested. “I’ll push the issue but I don’t know if it… I don’t know what’s actually going on with him.” Greg admitted. “He barely talks to me now.”

“So we sit him down and work out a plan. We’ll squeeze in some extra training, get him to pull up his socks and get things back on track. He needs a reality check.”
Spike went to Alec’s place, still trying to make up for the previous night. He cooked him dinner and set the table while Alec watched the game in the living room, occasionally calling Spike in to see the replay of a score.

He ate, making all the right noises and showing enthusiasm for the food. For Spike though, it was like his stomach had closed in on itself, and swallowing a mouthful of food seemed like a great feat. Alec was in a dangerous mood and he knew it.

Alec paused halfway through his meal and looked from his plate to Spike’s. “You’re not eating.”

“I’m not that hungry.”

“You eat at work?” “No.” “No?” “We were out serving a warrant this afternoon, debriefed and then I came straight here.” Spike hated how the anxiety made his voice shake.

“So you must be starving then, if you haven’t eaten since lunch.” There was an unpleasant twist in the smile on Alec’s face.

Spike looked down at his nearly full plate than back up at Alec.

“Here, let me help.” He took Spike’s fork, twisting it until it held a forkful of spaghetti. “Eat.” He commanded, placing the fork against Spike’s lips. “Open up, Michaelangelo.” said with insistence. Spike opened his mouth and Alex shoved the food in, Spike obediently chewing and swallowing, the food sliding heavily down into his stomach. Alec immediately scooped up a second forkful and pressed it to his lips.

By the third, Spike was pleading with him to stop, but Alec only shoved in another forkful. By the time the plate was half empty, there were tears trailing down Spike’s face as he chewed. Alec didn’t stop, forcing forkful after forkful into his mouth. Two thirds of the way through the plate, Spike’s stomach started to heave.

“Oh no you don’t. Do not throw up.” Alec’s voice held a clear warning but it was no use. Spike stumbled to the bathroom, collapsed to his knees next to the toilet and vomited up everything he’d eaten.

“You’re such a baby sometimes.” Alec spoke up and Spike, eyes and nose streaming, turned to see him leaning against the bathroom door. “You know, if you act like a bratty kid, I’m well within my rights to treat you like one. Clean up.” He threw a washcloth at Spike and walked out.

Spike flushed the toilet and washed his face and hands. When he came back out, Alec was back watching the game, finishing his own plate of food. He didn’t acknowledge Spike so he went to do the washing up.

He was up to his elbows in warm soapy water when Alec appeared behind him, pressing against his back. He thought it was an apology and reached for the dish cloth to dry his hands. “No, keep going.” Alec said, voice cold. Spike returned to scrubbing clean the pot, knowing how particular Alec was about cleanliness.

Alec’s hands roamed along his body, untucking his shirt, hands playing along Spike’s back, ignoring Spike’s flinch when his hands contacted bruises and sore spots. Then they moved around to Spike’s front, unbuckling his belt, undoing his button and opening his zip. “No Alec, please. I’m too sore.”

It was a fruitless protest, Spike knew. “Well whose fault is that, hmmm?” Rough hands pushed his
pants and boxers down to his knees. He tried to push back, away, but it only earned him a harsh smack to his flank.

“I told you, if you act like a kid, I’ll treat you like one. Keep cleaning. I want to see my face in those pots when you’re done.”

Harsh hands pushed his upper body forward over the sink and resigned, he reached for the pot once more.

A cry forced its way passed his lips as Alec forced his way inside him. Tears dripped from his cheeks and mingled with the soapy water.

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Alec had drank most of the bottle of wine Spike had brought and lay sleeping heavily next to him. Spike, in contrast, couldn’t sleep, his body sore and aching.

Team One had the next day off but he knew if he stayed, he’d be in for a repeat performance in the morning. Alec’s tempers sometimes lasted days, then he’d be contrite and apologetic, with flowers, tears and cuddles. Spike knew his time with Alec was taking its toll, his body wearing down with the harsh treatment. But he deserved it. For the mistakes he’d made, for the mistake he was. He knew too that he was going to lose his job. He was no longer the best of the best, no longer deserved the pants he wore.

Still, he wasn’t ready to give it up just yet and another day at the mercy of Alec’s temper would leave him, at least temporarily, unable to do his job. And he couldn’t go home. Alec had a key and even if he didn’t, his parents were fond of the charming Alexei and wouldn’t hesitate to let him in.

He carefully extracted himself from Alec’s grip, holding his breath as he waited to see if the other man woke. But he merely sighed and turned over. Spike got out of bed and padded around, gathering his clothes. He dressed in the bathroom, the harsh light above the sink illuminating the dark circles under his eyes and the bruising along his body. He found a couple of aspirin in the medicine cabinet and swallowed them down with a mouthful of water from the tap.

Alec was still sound asleep when he peaked his head out and crept across the room and out into the living room. He took his jacket from the back of the door before opening it and stepping out into the hallway. He knew it was a risk, leaving like this. It might incense Alec or he might realise he’d gone too far and be contrite, asking for Spike’s forgiveness. And Spike would forgive him. He’d as good as lost his team. Would soon lose his job. Alec was the only thing he had left. He gave Spike what he deserved.

He stepped out into the cool air of the night. It was almost one in the morning and the streets were quiet. He didn’t have anywhere to go. Couldn’t go to the SRU; that was something the dispatcher wouldn’t ignore, not to mention Team Four on the night shift, if they weren’t out on a call. He walked for a block or two, thinking. He desperately wanted to sleep, eyes drooping with tiredness. He had a sudden thought, borne of desperation and flagged down a passing taxi. “Where to?” the driver asked and Spike gave an address.
Chapter 2

Sam woke to a knocking on his door. His first thought was Natalie, the likeliest person to turn up in the middle of the night. So he was surprised to open the door and find Spike standing there. He looked worse for wear, pale with dark circles under his eyes.

“Can I sleep on your couch?”

He waved him in with a yawn, closing the door behind him. “What’s going on Spike?”

The bomb tech shrugged. “I just need a place to crash.”

“Why, did your parents finally kick you out?” He couldn’t help but tease. “Sam, please. I just need somewhere to sleep.” There was a desperate quality to Spike’s voice that Sam had never heard before.

“Sure, of course you can stay. I’ll make up the spare bed.”

“The couch is fine. Don’t go to any trouble.” Spike was looking down at his feet and it was hitting all sorts of wrong buttons in Sam’s mind.

“What’s wrong Spike? Talk to me.” He kept his tone soft, like he’d seen Greg do a hundred times with agitated subjects. “Please Sam, I’m really tired, I just want to sleep.” Spike looks up and Sam holds eye contact with him, willing him to open up. “Look, forget about it, I’ll just get out of your hair.” Spike takes two steps towards the door.

“Wait Spike. It’s fine. Here, sit down and I’ll sort the bed out.” Spike opened his mouth but Sam interrupted him before he could speak. “It’s no trouble. And it’ll be a lot more comfortable than sleeping on my couch.”

It took him a few minutes to wrestle sheets on to the bed but he returned to find Spike sitting tensely on the couch, jacket beside him, head in his hands. He got the sense that if he pushed, Spike would run, so he didn’t. “Bed’s ready. Bathrooms over there.” He pointed. “If you want anything from the kitchen, help yourself.”

Spike got to his feet. Was it Sam’s imagination or was he moving stiffly?

“Thanks Sam. I appreciate you letting me stay, and I’m sorry I woke you.”

“It’s fine Spike. Go get some rest.” Sam patted him on the shoulder, frowning when Spike winced at his touch.

Spike disappeared into the spare room and Sam went back to bed. It was a while before sleep found him.

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He woke early the next morning, the habit of a long ingrained routine. He listened near the closed door of the spare room, suspecting Spike was still asleep.

A buzzing sound distracted him and he went in search of the source. It was coming from Spike’s jacket which was lying in the couch. He reached a hand into the pocket and pulled out Spike’s phone just as the call ended, the name Alec briefly flashing across the screen. Spike had a handful of missed
calls and a few texts.

He heard the creak of a door and looked up to see Spike watching him. “Here. Your phone was ringing.” He handed it over. Spike glanced at it before slipping it into his pocket. He was wearing the same clothes he’d arrived in and Sam mentally berated himself for not giving his friend something more comfortable to sleep in.

“You want to take a shower?” He offered. “Um, sure. Thanks.” Spike replied. His phone buzzed again and he pulled it from his pocket, glancing at it before switching it off.

Sam showed him where the towels were kept, offered him a change of clothes and left him to clean up.

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Sam convinced him to stay for some breakfast. Tagging on a “you don’t have to talk about anything if you don’t want to.” He didn’t admit to Sam that he didn’t actually have anywhere else to go.

Sam cooked omelets while Spike sat on the couch, staring at the wall. Eventually, he pulled his phone out. Nine missed calls from Alec and three texts. The third text full of apologies. He sighed, knowing Alec wouldn’t give up, and text him back, explaining that he needed a few days. Alec’s reply was near instantaneous. ‘Of course. Whatever you need babe. Call me when you’re ready. I love you.’

It bought him some time, but not a lot. A day or two tops before Alec tried to track him down. But by then he’d be feeling less sore and more able. To do what, he didn’t know.

“Come and eat.” Sam called, setting two plates on the table. Spike stood and made his way over, taking a seat opposite Sam. As he picked up a forkful of omelet, he flashed back to the forced feeding of the night before, feeling the blood drain from his face.

“I have bread if you’d rather some toast.” Sam offered cautiously. Spike forced himself to take a deep breath and nibble some omelet, managing to swallow it down. “No. This is good. Thanks.” He gave Sam a weak smile and took another bite.

“Is it Alec?”

Spike froze, not letting himself move even an inch. “I saw his name on your phone. Is he the guy you’re seeing?” Spike managed a jerky nod in response. He could hear the effort it took Sam to keep the emotion from his voice. Was he jealous?

“Did you two have a fight or something?”

Spike played with the food on his plate, avoiding Sam’s eyes. They ate in silence for a while.

“So I was thinking maybe you could stay with me for a few days, if you want.” Sam was trying hard to sound casual.

Spike chewed and swallowed another mouthful of omelet as he considered Sam’s offer. It would ensure a few days breathing space from Alec, which he sorely needed, and he could tell his parents he was staying with Alec so they wouldn’t worry.

“Um, if it’s not too much of an imposition.”

“Bed’s made up and you already know where everything is.” Sam gestured around the small
apartment with a smile.

Spike took a sip of his coffee before speaking, giving him a moment to will away the tears that Sam’s kindness brought to the surface. He didn’t deserve it.

“Thanks Sam.”

“No problem. We’ll swing by your place after breakfast.”

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The day at Sam’s was one of the most peaceful Spike had had in a while. Sam went for a run after they collected Spike’s things and returned with some lunch and they lounged around eating and watching tv. Sam didn’t push him to talk, not even once, content to let the silence hang between them. There were concerned looks though, when he thought Spike was distracted.

They ate dinner on their laps, watching a hockey game. As it grew late, he offered to do the washing up but Sam insisted they do it together, handing Spike a dish cloth to dry up as he washed. Spike was happy to avoid close proximity with the sink after the previous night. As he dried he thought about Sam near propositioning him in the nightclub and wondered if that was the reason he was happy for Spike to stay. Did he want something from him? He tested the theory out a little as the last dish was put away, moving into Sam’s space where he stood beside the sink.

“Thanks for letting me stay. I really appreciate it.” He let his eyes roam down along Sam’s body before looking up into startled blue eyes.

“It’s not a problem Spike. Why don’t you go get some sleep, we’ve an early start in the morning.” Sam backed away as he spoke, confusion clear on his face as he neatly rebuffed Spike’s advances.

“Sure. Goodnight.” He said, feeling embarrassment bring heat to his face even as a sense of relief flooded him. He turned tail and headed for the spare bedroom.

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Spike was early for a change, Greg mused, as he caught sight of their bomb tech arriving, oddly enough, in the company of Sam. They were on standby for the morning, Team Two out on a call, but so far all was quiet. Greg had decided to have one-to-one meetings with each of the team, as a preamble to their requalification, and so that his meeting with Spike wouldn’t stand out from the crowd. He wasn’t looking forward to it.

He put Spike’s slot somewhere in the middle, right after Jules. He was unsurprised when Jules’ last comment before leaving the briefing room was concern about their wayward team member. They had all noticed that something wasn’t quite right.

Spike ambled into the room a few minutes later, shirt untucked and haphazardly buttoned, looking like he was without a care in the world. It set Greg’s teeth on edge before they even got started. As he sat down a second look by Greg caught the thinness of Spike’s frame under his clothes.

He frowned, then rifled through the pages in front of him until he found what he was looking for. The weekly weigh-ins. It confirmed what he suspected. Spike’s weight had been dropping for weeks now. Why hadn’t he noticed before? He shook his head, deciding not to get side-tracked. He and Ed had agreed that Spike needed a reality check. Greg would use this meeting to do that and then send Spike to Ed to nail down a training plan to get their wayward team mate back on track.

He didn’t pull any punches, outlining Spike’s deteriorating scores and making it clear that without
improvement, Spike would be off the team. He went through things in detail, pulling out Spike’s previous records to show where the worst of the scores were. Then he waited for Spike’s response.

“How long?” he asked. At Greg’s questioning look, he clarified. “How long until I’m off the team?”

“With no improvement, you won’t make it through requalification in five weeks, but I might be forced to pull you before that if things deteriorate further.” The words tasted bitter and gritty as they passed Greg’s lips.


“That’s worst case scenario Spike. As I said, Ed has agreed to set up a training programme with you, to get you back on track. If you work hard, give it your all, you’ll requalify like always and we can put all this behind us.”

Spike was infuriatingly unreactive. Almost like he wasn’t hearing Greg. Realising they were ten minutes over time and Sam, who was next to meet him, would surely be wondering what the hold up was, he sent Spike off to find Ed. Ed was handling the practical side of things and would spur Spike into action.

It was only after Spike left that something occurred to Greg. That maybe Spike’s slovenly appearance wasn’t him showing contempt for the rules but an attempt to distract attention, so Greg wouldn’t look more than skin deep. If so, it had worked.

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Spike wandered into the supply room while Ed was finishing up the inventory.

“Greg sent me.” Was all he said.

“Good. He told you the situation right? We have a lot of work to do to make sure you’re above qualifying standard in five weeks.”

Spike’s response was lacklustre at best. He seemed disinterested. Ed clicked his fingers to get his attention. “Spike, are you even listening to me?”

“Sure Ed. I’m listening.” Spike replied, with a distracted air.

“Spike.” Ed forced himself to keep his voice calm. “We don’t want to lose you from this team. Work with me here.”

His eyes darted upward for a moment, meeting Ed’s gaze. “Okay Ed, what do I need to do?”

Ed outlined the training programme he had drawn up. It was intensive. A lot of early mornings and late evenings. Spike looked tired just hearing about it.

“Buddy, is something going on at home? Maybe something with your parents?”

Spike looked startled at the sudden change in direction. “No, nothing is going on.”

He answered too quickly, eyes flicking to the side, and Ed was well enough versed in body language to read so clear a lie.

“Okay Spike, but you know I’m here if you ever need to talk?”

For a moment Spike’s eyes met his, locked on and didn’t look away. He could see desperation in
them and fear. Spike was hiding something, something he was afraid to tell them. But then he blinked and the look was gone.

“When do we start? The training.”

“This evening, if we don’t get called out.”

Spike nodded in acknowledgement as Winnie’s voice came over the intercom. “Team One, hot call.”

“Come on Spike, time to go.” Ed clapped a hand on Spike’s shoulder, giving him a second glance when Spike tensed beneath his touch. A worry was growing in his mind but he pushed it away. They had a call to deal with. Whatever was going on with Spike would just have to wait.
Their call was straightforward. Armed robbery of a gas station that went a little awry. It took only a short while for Greg to talk the subject into surrendering and the hostages were released unharmed.

Ed had put Spike in the truck for the call and Spike had perked up a bit as they worked, working his magic to get them access to CCTV and even an internal intercom for the building.

They got back and debriefed, finishing their shift right on time. Ed watched an awkward interaction between Sam and Spike before Sam headed for the door. He crossed the hall to where Spike still stood.

“What was that about?”

“Nothing.” Spike waved it off.

“You ready to do some training?”

Spike looked anything but, pale and drawn. He nodded in answer to Ed’s question but seemed like he’d rather be doing anything else.

“Buddy, are you sure you’re feeling okay?”

“I’m fine.” Spike’s reply was lifeless, his face a blank slate. It was so different to their usually expressive team mate. Ed tried to think back and remember when he’d last seen Spike laugh or joke. He could recall a few times, a month or so after Lou’s death, where Spike had seemed more his normal self, a spark of life in him but now…

“Oh, let’s start with some firearms training.”

He wanted to start on something more intensive, running laps or circuit training, but Spike looked like a stiff wind would knock him over. Maybe, if they spent some time together, he could get the reticent geek to open up.

They started simple, Ed running Spike through basic checks he could do with his eyes closed, assembling and disassembling the weapons they commonly used. Then he took him to the range to shoot some targets.

Compared to the more physical skills, Spike’s accuracy hadn’t disimproved that much. The steadiness of his hands was a problem though, which worried Ed. Their bomb technician having shaky hands wasn’t something they could ignore.
That worry fell to the bottom of the list a minute later, when Spike rolled up his sleeves between clips, revealing an ugly bruise on his arm.

“Buddy, did you get hurt on a call?” Ed asked. He didn’t recall hearing about an injury and Spike was normally vocal about anything bigger than a papercut.

Spike turned to him, brow furrowed. “No, why?”

“Your arm.” Ed nodded his head towards it. Spike looked down, clocked the bruise, and paled, pulling his sleeves down to hide his arms.

“It’s nothing. I…I…” Spike struggled to get the words out, looking panicked before grasping on an answer. “I was fixing my Dad’s car, I banged it. That’s all.”

It was the second lie Spike had told him that day.


“I’m sure you’re right buddy, but let me take a look just to make sure.”

Spike didn’t reply but neither did he resist when Ed reached for his arm, lifting it gently and pushing his sleeve up.

The bruise didn’t look any better on second glance and neither did it fit with what Spike had just told him. It wasn’t the kind of bruise you got from a bang or a blow, given the way it ran almost all the way around the circumference of Spike’s arm. It was the kind you got from someone holding your arm in a crushing grip and not letting go. He could almost make out the imprint of fingers. He ran his finger gently over the skin before pinning Spike with a searching look.

“Buddy, do you want to talk me through how this happened again? Because unless your Dad’s car has fingers, you’re not being honest with me.”

Spike bit his lip before looking up and meeting his eyes. “I did something stupid. I went out for a drink and mouthed off to some guy. He got a bit hands on but I managed to talk my way out of it.”

“You report it?”

“I was drunk Ed. And I pretty much started it.”

“Who were you with?”

Spike shrugged. “I was by myself. I just wanted some fun, you know?”

“Where did it happen?”

“Does it matter?” Spike started to get angry but then deflated abruptly. “It was outside a nightclub.”

Ed sensed Spike wasn’t telling the truth but it wasn’t a complete lie either.

“Okay Spike.” He let go of Spike’s arm and took a step back, looking him up and down. “You hurt anywhere else buddy? Your shoulder maybe?” Ed asked, remembering Spike tensing beneath his hand earlier.

Spike shook his head, taking half a step back.
“Is there another reason you didn’t mention what happened Spike? Maybe the cops got involved, gave you a pass when they saw your ID?” Ed was wracking his brain to think of a reason Spike would be lying to him.

“No, nothing like that. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you, it was just stupid and embarrassing and I didn’t want you to think I couldn’t take care of myself.” That sounded more likely but still something wasn’t ringing true.

“Alright. It’s late Spike. Let’s call it a night.”

“Sure.” Spike seemed relieved, whether due to the end of his interrogation or the cessation of their training for the evening, Ed wasn’t sure.

“Um, Ed.”

“Yeah buddy?”

“I really appreciate you doing this. The extra training.”

“I’m glad I can help. We’ll get you back on track in no time.”

***

Spike declined a lift from Ed to avoid the awkward conversation of why he was staying with Sam. He waited for Ed to leave before he did, saying goodnight to the dispatcher and heading out the main door.

“Hey, there you are.” A voice called from the darkness. He froze.

“Alec?”

“Hi Mike. I’m sorry, I couldn’t stay away. Let me drive you home?” Alec stepped out of the shadows, car keys in hand. “I’m parked just down the block.”

Spike wished he had the power to go back in time, just a few minutes, and take up Ed’s offer of a lift, but it was too late. Now he was tired, it was cold out and Alec had his best puppy dog face on.

“Sure, thanks.”

He followed Alec to his car, getting in the passenger seat.

“Your place? Mine?” Alec asked. “Mine, please.” Spike said, letting his head fall back and his eyes close. “How did you know I was still here?”

“An educated guess. You weren’t at your place, you weren’t at mine. You’re not mad are you? I know you wanted space but I just really needed to see you.” Alec sounded genuinely worried.

“I’m not mad.” Spike replied. They stayed silent for the rest of the journey, Spike keeping his eyes closed, awake but resting.

“Here, let’s get you inside.” Alec said and he did just that, getting Spike down the stairs and into his basement room. The cold air outside had been enough to rouse Spike once more. “I need the bathroom.” He mumbled as he entered the room, dropping his phone and coat on the table.

When he came back out Alec was sitting at the table, Spike’s phone in front of him.
He looked up as Spike approached. Gone was the worry, the puppy dog eyes.

“So where were you yesterday and last night? You weren’t working, you weren’t here and you certainly weren’t with me.” Alec’s tone was light, nothing to suggest there was any strong emotion behind it.

“I stayed with a friend.”

“A friend?” Alec’s voice was quiet.

“Yeah.”

“With Sam?” His voice was gentle.

“Yeah.”

“He’s texting wondering where you are. Why is that?” There was the merest hint of anger in Alec’s voice. It was more than enough to send a shiver of dread down Spike’s spine.

“I was supposed to stay with him for a few days.”

With a flick of his hand, Alec slid the phone across the table to him.

“Text him back. Tell him you’re home.”

“Okay.”

He sent a quick text telling Sam he’d decided to go home for the night.

Alec held his hand out for the phone and Spike handed it to him.

The phone buzzed a minute later.

“That was a quick reply. He’s asking if you’re sure and if everything is okay.” Alec looked at him for a long moment. Spike didn’t move, didn’t react.

“Here.” He tossed the phone back to Spike. “Call him. Reassure him everything is fine and you’ll see him in the morning.”

“Alec…” Spike tried to protest.

“Call him.” Alec insisted. “Now.”

“Alec, I think we need to slow this down, take a break…”

“Oh, is that what this is? You shacking up with Sam at his place while I’m home, desperate with worry…”

“No, of course not. I’d never do anything like that. I love you…”

“But you spent two nights with your teammate who you’ve had a crush on for years…”

“I stayed in his spare room. I just needed some space, somewhere to crash.”

“But you can see how it looks to me, can’t you? You staying with the guy you slept with a few months ago…”
“I’m sorry Alec, I didn’t mean to upset you.”

“How come you were so late leaving today?”

The sudden change of topic flustered Spike.

“Um, I was doing some extra training for the requalification next month. I’ve fallen a bit behind so I need to do some catching up.”

“With Sam?” Alec asked.

“No, with Ed.”

“You and Ed, training alone?” Alec asked.

“He’s our team leader, he’s in charge of my training.”

“Another team mate you had sex with a few months ago.”

“That’s all over Alec. It was just one night, we were drunk.”

“How do you think all this makes me feel? You spending all that time alone with your teammates while avoiding spending time with me. God, I love you so much babe, I’ve been going out of my mind these past two days.”

Alec held his head in his hands, looking torn. He looked up again and asked, voice quiet.

“Do you want to break up? Is that what this is about?”

“No, no of course not. I love you too. But things just got to be a bit much the other night. I needed some space.”

“I only do what I do because I care about you, Mike. You don’t eat enough, you’re getting too skinny.” Alec said. “I hate pushing you to eat like the other night but you need to keep your strength up to do the kind of job you do.”

Spike knew the Alec was subtly twisting what had happened the other night, like he’d done many times before. And it usually worked, getting things turned around enough in Spike’s head that he wasn’t sure which way was up or down. But the memory of forkful after forkful of food being forced into him as tears dripped down his face hadn’t dimmed in the two days since.

“Force feeding me until I throw up isn’t caring about me.” He spoke up, surprising himself.

Alec paused, seeming shocked by his words.

“Well if that’s how you feel...” he stood up and grabbed his jacket from the back of the chair. “I guess I should be going.” He walked to the door.

Spike panicked at the sight of the one good thing left in his life about to walk away from him. “No, Alec, please. Don’t go.”

“Give me one good reason I should stay, Mike? You don’t appreciate me and the things I do for you. I’m always here for you, despite your irregular hours, your long shifts and yet you pull away from me, disappear for days causing me endless worry. And then it’s somehow my fault?”

Spike got up and went to him. He could feel the tears sliding down his face.
“No, Alec, please. I didn’t mean it like that. I’m just tired and worn out with everything. I didn’t meant to take it out on you. Please, stay.”

Alec released the door handle and let his head rest against the door. “Are you sure this is what you want? That I’m what you want?”

“Of course. I love you.”

When Alec turned around, he was smiling. “I love you too, babe.” He leaned in and kissed Spike, ignoring the tears on his face. He wrapped arms around him, drawing him into a tight hug. It only hurt a little when his hands pressed on Spike’s bruises but Spike knew a little bit of pain was worth it. When Alec pulled away and handed him his phone, he sent another text to Sam, reassuring him that everything was fine and he’d see him the next day. Then Alec tossed the phone back on the table.

“Come on, let’s go to bed.” Alec said, leading him across the room. He went willingly.

He sat on the side of the bed and started pulling his shoes and socks off, then his jeans, boxers and t-shirt. Alec was standing by the dresser, watching. Spike wanted to ask if they could just cuddle and sleep for the night, but he knew the look in Alec’s eye, knew he wouldn’t be content with that, would see it as a further rejection.

As Spike lifted his t-shirt over his head, Alec spoke. “I have the day off tomorrow. Call in sick and we’ll spend it together.”

He tossed the shirt onto the floor with the rest of his clothes. “Alec, I can’t. I’m not sick and my team needs me.”

“I need you.”

“That’s not the same thing.” He spoke gently. “I can’t let them down. I’m already in trouble with Ed and Greg.”

“You spend all your time with them. You work with them, socialise with them. You’ve spent more alone time with Sam and Ed this week than you have with me.”

“That’s just how the job is…”

“I’m not talking about the job. I’m talking about you out with Sam at that nightclub. Then staying at his place for two nights. Then staying after hours at work with Ed.”

“The whole team was out at the nightclub Alec. And Ed’s training me.” Spike’s protests fell on deaf ears.

“I’ve waited for you, out of my mind with worry about something happening to you while you’re off having a great time with guys you have a thing for.”

“Alexei, please…”

“Are you sleeping with them?”

“No! Of course not.”

“Just spending a lot of alone time with them. Is that what you expect me to believe? And now you won’t even do this one small thing for me because you’ll let Sam and Ed down. You’re fooling
yourself Mike, you’re not that essential. The team won’t fall apart without you there. Hell, from what you’ve said, they’d be better off with you gone.”

The words hit home and Spike rocked back on the bed, shocked. But Alec wasn’t finished.

“I can’t believe how ungrateful you are for all I’ve done for you. How willing you are to abandon me at a moment’s notice for guys who used you up and spat you out.” Alec started getting undressed, undoing his belt buckle and pulling it out slowly from his trousers.

“I can’t let this go babe. Can’t let you treat me like this without any kind of consequences. I’m not your plaything. I’m your boyfriend.”

Spike looked up, tears falling freely from his eyes, to see Alec loop the belt in his hands and walk towards him.

“I promise you babe, this will hurt me more than it hurts you.”

“Alec, no!” He had a moment to protest before Alec pushed him back onto the bed. He rolled over and tried to get his arms under him but Alec’s hand came down hard on his upper back, pinning him to the mattress.

“Alexei, stop!” He struggled to push up with his hands and feet.

“Shh, Mike. We don’t want your parents hearing now do we? Don’t want them to worry.” With that, he grabbed Spike’s hair with his fist and forced his head face down into the mattress. A second later the belt landed with a stinging blow across his back.

His cry was muffled by the bed clothes beneath him. The second blow was lower, the third across his shoulders. The fourth and fifth hit buttocks and thighs, burning pain across his skin that peaked as the buckle of the belt tore at his skin. He kept his face turned into the mattress as he cried out. Alexei was right, he didn’t want his parents to hear this.

He stopped counting but there were only a handful more blows before they stopped. He could hear Alexei behind him, breathing hard.

“I’m sorry babe, but it’s for your own good. You have to learn you can’t treat people like that.”

Sobbing freely into the mattress, Spike tried to get his hands under him, push himself up. “Stay there babe, don’t move.” Alec said. Spike ignored him, needing to get up, get to his feet.

“I said stay there.” There was residual anger in Alec’s voice, not all spent by taking it out on Spike with his belt. Spike felt Alec grab his left hand and forced it behind him, before doing the same with his right.

“Alexei..” Before he could formulate words through the pain, his arms were encircled close to his elbows with the cool leather of the belt and it was cinched tight.

“You’re trying my patience tonight Mike. You’re mine.” He grabbed Spike around the waist and yanked him toward the edge of the bed. “Not Sam’s, not Ed’s.” He heard the sound of a zip and the rustle of clothing. “Not Greg’s.” Hands encircled his thighs, forcing them further apart, Alec moving so he stood between them.

“Alexei, please don’t.” He tried to struggle but every movement was agony, his shoulders straining from the pressure of his bound arms.
A hand gripped his hair again, turning his head and forcing his face back down into the mattress.

“You need to learn that you’re mine, Mike. I own you.” He entered him in one harsh thrust, Spike’s scream muffled by the mattress, absorbing sounds and tears alike.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Warnings as per tags, but more graphic in parts this chapter. Thanks for all the comments, helps keep the momentum going.

“Mike?” A worried voice accompanied the hand that was tapping his face. “Wake up buddy.”

“Ed?” he asked groggily. “Is it time for work out?”

“No, it’s Alec, Mike. You need to call in sick to work. You’re not well enough.”

“No, can’t let the team…” he tried to sit up, gasping when pain spread in waves across his back and arms. “What? Alexei, I can’t move my arms.” It was like trying to think through treacle, his thoughts thick and sticky. He hands were pulled up in front of him and he followed them with his eyes, adjusting to the dimness of the room. They were tied to the headboard by a belt. Alec’s belt.

It all came rushing back to him, the argument, Alec’s jealousy. His terrible punishment.

“You need to call in sick Mike. I’ve got your phone. I’ll put it on speaker. Tell them you’ve got the flu. Okay?”

Alec was insistent and Spike realised he wasn’t in a position of strength to argue. He nodded.

“Okay, here you go.” He put the phone down next to him and dialled Greg’s number.

“Morning Spike, are you running late buddy?” Greg’s breathless voice came through the speaker. He’d obviously been working out.

“No boss. I’m sick today, won’t make it in. Sorry.” He did sound sick, voice strained and hoarse.

“You been to the doctor yet?”

“No, I think it’s just the flu or laryngitis maybe.” His voice cracked and nearly disappeared, lending weight to his excuse.

“Alright Spike. Well go get some rest and feel better. We’ll talk soon.”

“Thanks boss.”

Alec hung up the call.

“Good job babe.”

Spike tried to shift, get his legs under him.

“Alec, can you untie me, please? My arms really hurt.”

“I don’t think you’ve earned that yet, do you? You fought me every step of the way last night. Like a recalcitrant child. I expected better.” Spike vaguely remembered trying to get up after Alec had
finished. Remembered being dragged back to the bed by his hair. Remembered a second round with Alec’s belt, a rough hand pressed over his mouth to muffle his cries.

Spike could tell Alec’s temper hadn’t blown over. He was still furious. This was worse than Spike had ever seen him.

“I’m going to make you wait for me, like I waited for you.” He leaned over, cupping Spike’s face in his palm, ignoring Spike’s flinch at the contact, and kissed him, a harsh and bruising press against his lips.

“But I’m gonna leave you with something to think about too. A reminder of how much I love you.”

He flipped Spike onto his stomach from his side, causing him to cry out in pain. The movement twisted the belt holding his arms tighter.

He pushed a finger inside Spike, forcing another cry past his lips.

“Don’t be such a baby Mike.”

“Alec, please. It hurts.”

“Oh, alright then.” He reached over to the bedside locker, opening the drawer and pulling out a small bottle.

“You don’t deserve this but I don’t want you complaining when I come back for you that you’re too sore to make love. I want you to beg me for it.”

He shoved another finger into Spike, slippery and cold. It still hurt but Spike muffled his whimper in the pillow. Now that it wasn’t in the heat of anger, Alec took his time, slipping two fingers in, then a third. This time, when he entered Spike, he thrust in slowly at first. He was kneeling between Spike’s legs and as he pulled out and thrust in again, he braced himself either side of Spike’s back, hands brushing welts and cuts. Spike crushed his eyes closed, trying to block everything out and just breathe through the pain.

Alec’s thrusts sped up and he grunted with each one. As he reached his climax, he snaked a hand around Spike’s hip, reaching between his legs. Spike was limp, in too much pain and fear to be aroused. Alec squeezed him cruelly, forcing another cry from him.

“When I come back, I expect you to fully participate in our love making. Do I make myself clear?”

Spike lifted his head from the tear stained pillow as Alec climbed off him. “Yes Alexei.” A few more tears slipped from his cheeks.

"I know this is hard babe, but we'll be the stronger for it, our love will be the stronger for it. I love you so much, you know that right?" Spike nodded, watching Alec with careful eyes. He could see the expectant look on Alec's face. "I love you too, Alec." The words felt hollow and empty until Alec smiled at him, and the tension inside him eased a little.

He let his head rest on the pillow again as Alec moved around the room, getting dressed.

Spike flinched when a hand brushed his shoulder and Alec leaned in to kiss him again. “I’ll be back, once I feel you’ve learned your lesson. I’ll take your phone with me. If anyone texts or calls, I’ll make sure to let them know from you that you’re resting but your voice is gone. So no one will worry. Oh and I borrowed the key to your place from your Ma because I lost mine, so you won’t be disturbed.” He pressed another kiss to Spike’s forehead and with that he was gone, footsteps fading
and door banging closed. For the first while Spike just lay there unmoving, pain wracking his body. He dozed for a bit but every slight movement jarred him awake and the burning pain in his arms only grew.

Finally, with great effort, he got his knees under him and crawled closer to the headboard. It lessened the strain on his shoulders which gave him some room to think.

Moving closer to the headboard also gave some slack on the belt and he realised he might be able to work his hands free. But if he did, that would be it. He couldn’t stay here waiting for Alec to come back, he’d be furious that Spike had disobeyed him, and after last night his body wasn’t up for taking more punishment.

So he had two choices; leave his hands bound and wait for Alec’s return or free his hands and get out of there. If he did that, it would be the end of their relationship, but if he stayed... he couldn’t live through another night like last night. Nothing was worth that.

He heard sounds from outside and his body flooded with terror. Was Alexei back already? He listened carefully until he realised it was probably just the mailman. His reaction was enough to make his mind up for him though. He wasn’t waiting for Alec to return.

He thought the loop around his left hand was the loosest and worked it carefully, twisting and tugging despite the pain until his hand began to slowly slip through the tough leather. Gritting his teeth and pulling hard he managed to free his hand and was then able to undo the belt and free his right hand. Stark bruises stood out on his wrists and nearer his elbows from his arms being tied behind him. There was a welt across the back of his arm as well, where the belt had caught him after Alexei went for him the second time. He didn’t want to think about what the rest of his body looked like. And he didn’t have time. Alec could be back any minute.

He pulled some clothes on, doing his best to ignore the stiffness in his muscles and the pain that ran along the whole of his body. He used the bathroom quickly, swallowing some pain pills with a mouthful of water from the tap, glancing at himself in the mirror as he did. Alexei had been careful as always. There wasn’t a mark on his face, just the pallor of his skin and dark circles under his eyes to give away that something wasn’t right.

He left his room, listening and watching out for his parents, but neither were to be seen. He remembered it was their shopping day and they’d have gone out early for groceries.

He left on foot, heading slowly towards the nearest main road to flag down a cab. Adrenaline had kicked in, getting him up and out but he knew it wouldn’t last long and when he crashed, he’d crash hard.

***

Ed cornered Greg mid-morning to talk about Spike. He told him about the bruise on his arm and Spike’s reluctance to tell him what had happened.

“I don’t know what to think Greg. I mean, is he taking risks, getting himself into trouble deliberately?”

“He’s certainly skirting a line at work but I hadn’t seen any indication things were as bad at home. He came out with us the other night, didn’t get drunk, didn’t do anything risky, turned up to work early the next day.” Greg seemed reluctant to believe there was a problem.

“I’m telling you Greg, something’s not right. And he won’t talk to me about it.”
“He won’t talk to me either.” They looked up to see Sam standing behind them, worry clear on his face.

“He turned up at my place two days ago, in the middle of the night, asking to crash on my couch. Wouldn’t tell me what was wrong. But I know he’s been seeing someone and I thought maybe they’d had a fight. It didn’t explain why he couldn’t stay at his own place but when I tried to get him to talk about it, he clammed up and tried to leave, so I stopped pushing.”

“I didn’t know he was seeing anyone. Did you?” Greg asked Ed, who shook his head.

“I don’t think I’d know either only I kind of made a pass at him the other night after a few drinks and it slipped out. I mean, we’re probably not top on his list for people to confide in about his love life given what happened.” Sam said, looking embarrassed at his admission.

It was the first time any of them had made reference to that night three months previously and it raised the guilt and regret in Greg that he felt every time he thought back on it. They had made a mistake, taken advantage of Spike’s grief and intoxicated state. Taken advantage of him. Greg was the one in charge, he should have stopped it, but he hadn’t.

“Okay, I’ll speak with him when he comes back, get him to see the psychologist. If he doesn’t want to talk to us, probably better that he talks to her.”

He caught the look on Ed’s face. "What do you want me to do Ed? He won't talk to me, not anymore."

"Have you even tried, really tried, to talk to him? Come on Greg, you can talk down guys half out of their mind on meth and people who've left nothing to lose. Are you really telling me you can't get through to Spike?"

Greg didn’t reply. He knew Ed was right.

***

Sam had tried calling Spike twice during the day, getting a text from him after the second call that he had lost his voice and couldn’t talk.

“He seemed fine last night.” Ed had said that morning, looking puzzled, when Greg had told them he was sick.

“He has been run down lately, an illness like that might have hit him pretty fast.” Greg had replied. “He sounded terrible on the phone.”

Sam messaged him again later in the day, getting a swift, if brief, reply. He thought about calling by after their shift, maybe bringing some chicken soup, but their last call, a jumper facing a long prison sentence who was reluctant to be talked down, ran over shift. It was late by the time he climbed the stairs to his apartment, feeling the chill in the air even in the stairwell.

As he put his key in the door, he had the sense of someone watching him. He turned slowly and scoured the hall behind him. That was when he made out the familiar figure sitting on the stairs heading up to the next floor, head leaning against the stair rail.

“Spike?” he asked as the stepped towards him. His teammate was pale, dark circles under his closed eyes.

Spike’s eyes blinked opened, wide and frightened for a moment until he recognised who was
standing in front of him.

“Sam, I… I need help.”
He’d sat for hours in the stairwell, waiting for Sam to return, pain warring with exhaustion as he struggled to keep his eyes open. Exhaustion won out, his head falling to rest against the metal rail.

He woke to someone calling his name, his heart racing before he’d even worked out who, what or why. Alec… but it was Sam. “Sam, I… I need help.”

It felt so good to say it, admit it out loud. When Sam said nothing in response, he had the horrible thought that maybe he’d made a mistake, maybe Sam wouldn’t help him…

“Buddy, what are you doing here? You’re sick, you should be in bed.”

Sam dropped to a crouch in front of him, concerned blue eyes looking him up and down. He reached a hand out and Spike didn’t mean to, but couldn’t stop his flinch. Sam lowered his hand with a frown. “Hey…” One word, suffused with concern, warmth and gentleness. “It’s okay, it’s just me.” Sam gave him a small smile. “Let’s get you inside. Can you stand?”

Spike nodded, reaching a hand for the stair rail to pull himself to his feet. Sam reached out to help, movements slow and careful. Spike couldn’t stop the pained sound he made as he stood, Sam’s arm on his, supporting him. They started towards the door, Spike trying to manage even steps but was thwarted by the pain and stiffness that had set in after sitting in the stairwell for so long.

“Spike, you’re freezing cold. How long have you been out here?”

“A while.” His voice was hoarse.

“What didn’t you call me?”

“Don’t have my phone.” He croaked.

Sam paused to unlock the door, holding it open and helping Spike in. “Here, let’s get you sitting down.”

Another pained sound forced its way past Spike’s lips as he sat down. God it hurt. The painkillers he’d taken had worn off hours ago.

Sam crouched down beside him again. “How can I help, Spike? What do you need?” Spike looked into his teammate’s worried eyes. He wished he could say something to reassure him.

“Um, have you got some tylenol or advil?” Anything to take the edge off the pain.

“Sure, hold on.”

Spike let his head fall back against the couch, eyes closing. It seemed like only seconds later that Sam was back, dropping two pills into his hand and holding out a glass of water. He swallowed...
them down before chugging down the rest of the water. He’d hadn’t had anything to drink all day, tongue like sandpaper in his mouth.

“You want some more?” Sam asked.

“No, I’m good. Thanks Sam.” He was so tired. It was hard to keep his eyes open.

“Okay, hold on.” Sam disappeared again.

He didn’t hear him come back, but when he opened his eyes, Sam was placing a pillow on the couch and guiding Spike to lie his head down on it. Then hands were pulling his shoes off and lifting his feet up and a blanket was laid across him, followed by another.

There was a pause. “Spike, can you wake up a minute.”

“Hmm? I’m awake.” He forced his eyes open, looking into Sam’s once more. “You didn’t hit your head or anything, did you? Should I be taking you to the hospital?”

He shook his head, eyes closing again before he forced them open once more. “No, my head’s fine. I’m just tired. Don’t need a hospital.”

“Oh, buddy. Get some rest, I’ll keep an eye on you.”

***

Greg signed off on his report, mind only half on the page in front of him. Ed and Sam’s observations of Spike kept running through his mind and he thought back on what he’d seen of Spike the past few weeks and months.

For a while after the night they’d slept together, Spike had seemed quiet and subdued. Nothing alarming, given he’d just lost his best friend. Things had picked up after a month or so, Spike more his happy, chatty self. Then there’d been a slow slide downward, so slow, Greg almost hadn’t noticed until Spike’s scores started looking dismal.

Ed had been right though. Greg hadn’t really tried to connect to Spike since that night. Too angry with himself and filled with guilt about what he’d allowed to happen. And when he started noticing Spike struggling, he tried to ignore it, afraid if he looked too deeply into it, it would be all his fault.

But he couldn’t ignore it any more. When he put it all together, not just the apparent personality change but the physical changes, it painted an ugly picture. And then there was the bruising… But there were too many missing pieces in the puzzle. He needed to talk to Spike.

He found Ed in the locker room.

“I was thinking of swinging by Spike’s place. Check and see how he’s doing.”

Ed put down his bag and turned to him. “I was thinking of doing the same. Let’s go together. I’ll drive.”

***

Sam watched Spike as he slept, holding his phone in his hand. He had Greg’s number up on the screen but hesitated to press the call button. Was he overreacting? He could tell something was wrong, something more than Spike being sick, but he didn’t know what it was.

His phone rang, Ed’s name appearing on the screen. He answered, keeping his voice down.
“Hey Ed.”

“Sam, have you heard from Spike? Greg and I called by his place but there’s no answer. His Mom hasn’t seen him for a few days and thinks he’s with Alec but Spike’s not answering his phone and they don’t have a number for Alec. We’re worried.”

Sam kept his voice quiet.

“He’s here Ed. I found him asleep in my stairwell a few minutes ago. He’s sleeping on my couch. Something’s not right. Can you come over?”

“We’re on our way buddy.”

***

Ed knocked lightly on the door, Greg standing just behind him. Sam opened it moments later and ushered them in.

“How is he?”

“Still sleeping.” Sam gestured to the couch.

Ed walked over and crouched down next to him. Spike’s eyes were closed, his breathing deep. He was pale, except for a red tinge suffusing his cheeks and a sheen across his forehead. Ed laid a hand on his forehead, feeling the heat radiating from him.

“He’s warm. Might have a fever.”

As he pulled his hand back, Spike stirred, a pained whimper escaping his mouth.

“Spike, buddy? Can you wake up for me?”

He placed a hand on Spike’s shoulder and shook gently. He wasn’t expecting Spike’s reaction. He came to violently, with a hoarse cry, twisting from Ed’s grasp.

“No, Alexei, please.” The words hung in the air between them as Spike became aware of his surroundings. “What… Ed?”

“Hey Spike, sorry buddy I didn’t mean to startle you.”

Spike didn’t reply, bright eyes roaming around the room. He took in Sam standing at the other end of the couch, then noticed Greg.

“You’re all here.”

“We were worried about you. How are you feeling?”

“Sore.” Spike answered, with a hitch of his breath.

“What were you doing out in the stairwell? Why aren’t you in bed?” Ed kept his tone gentle, trying to catch Spike’s eye.

“Wanted to see Sam.” He answered. His body tensed further and he made another small sound of discomfort.

“Buddy, are you in pain?”
His reply was a nod, words almost obscured by a sob. “It hurts.”

“I gave him some tylenol just before you called.” Sam interrupted.

“Where does it hurt Spike?” Ed asked.

“ Everywhere.” Spike breathed his answer out with a pained sigh.

“That sounds like the flu doesn’t it? Aches and pains everywhere?” Sam asked hesitantly.

“Yeah, it does.” Greg spoke up. “Sam, is the spare bed made up?”

Ed saw Spike relax a little at Greg’s words even as a flash of disappointment crossed his face.

***

As Ed helped Spike into the spare room, Greg cornered Sam. “Do you have something Spike can sleep in? And a first aid kit.”

Sam looked a little surprised at his second request, but nodded. “Sure, I’ll go get them.”

He was back in less than a minute, handing the clothes and the kit to Greg who carried them into the guest room where Ed was helping Spike sit on the side of the bed. He left the kit on the dresser before turning to the two men.

“Ed, will you give us a few minutes.” At Ed’s questioning look, he added. “I’ll get him settled in bed.”

Ed nodded, reluctantly standing and leaving the room, shutting the door behind him.

Spike was sitting on the side of the bed, head down. He looked up as Greg moved towards him, crouching in front of him. He had the clothes Sam had given him in his hand and he dropped them on the bed next to Spike.

“Spike, buddy, do you think you can tell me what happened?” Spike didn’t reply, eyes watching Greg carefully.

“Okay. I’m gonna help you get changed. Sam gave you some clothes to sleep in.”

“I can do it myself.” There was a fearful wariness in Spike’s eyes. “Let me help buddy.” He gentled his voice, trying to ease the fear on Spike’s face.

He knew it wasn’t the flu. Had seen the look on Spike’s face when he’d agreed with Sam’s supposition. Spike desperately wanted them to know but couldn’t find the words to tell them. So Greg would need to see for himself.

He reached out and eased the jacket off Spike’s shoulders. Spike helped a little, pulling his arms from the material, a pained grimace crossing his face. It didn’t shed any light on the problem, Spike’s face and neck unmarred.

“Can you lift your arms up?” Greg asked. Spike did, moving slowly, avoiding Greg’s eyes. Greg forced himself to take slow breaths as he reached for the hem of Spike’s shirt, lifting it up and over his head and arms before dropping it to the bed beside him.

Spike’s breathing had sped up, whether from pain or fear Greg wasn’t sure. He lowered his arms slowly, but didn’t try to cover himself. Greg forced himself to look, eyes confirming what his heart
had known.

Tears began to slip down Spike’s face. Greg carefully leaned over to take a look at Spike’s back. What he saw made him curse silently, even as his heart plummeted inside his chest.

“Aw, Michaelangelo.” Greg murmured under his breath, as he moved so they were face to face again.

***

“It’s not the flu, is it?” Sam asked Ed as they stood in the living room, watching the closed door of the guest room. Ed just shook his head. His phone rang and he moved away a little to answer, conducting a quiet, brief conversation before returning to Sam.

He couldn’t keep the confused look from his face and Sam caught on immediately. “What is it?”

“That was Spike’s mom. Said Alexei called her just now and told her Spike was with him, sleeping off a bout of the flu.”

Sam’s bewildered look matched his. The door to the spare room opened and Greg came out. He looked pale and shocked.

“How bad is it?” Ed had to know.

“Bad. He point blank refused to go to the hospital and wouldn’t let me call a doctor.”

All three exchanged concerned looks.

“What about Rolie’s wife?” Ed asked. She worked part time as a family practitioner but Ed knew she did out of hours calls and home visits.

Greg nodded slowly. “Call him, see if she can come. Ask him to keep this quiet Ed, until we have some idea what’s going on.”

“Spike’s boyfriend just called his Mom and told her Spike was with him. Why would he do that?” Sam asked.

“That’s something we’ll have to ask Spike, when he’s up to talking. Why don’t you go in and sit with him, Sam. He’s awake.”

Sam entered the spare room, closing the door behind him.

As soon as the door closed, Greg seemed to crumble. Ed reached for him, guiding him to sit down, steady hand resting on his shoulder. “Tell me Greg. If Spike can’t talk to us, you’ll have to do it for him.”

“Ed, he’s been badly beaten. If I had to guess, I’d say with a belt. All along the back of his body, and a handful on his arms and stomach. A few look defensive, like he was trying to shield himself from the blows. And he has bruising on his wrists and elbows that look like ligature marks.”

“He didn’t have those last night.” Ed interjected, remembering examining the bruise on Spike’s arm less than a day ago.

“Yeah, the belt and the ligature marks look recent. But he’s got older bruises and cuts too. Days or weeks old probably.”
“Did you… notice anything else.” He couldn’t get the words out to ask what he wanted to know.

There were tears in Greg’s eyes when he looked up at Ed once more. “He wouldn’t let me take his boxers off. But he has bruising on his thighs that look like finger marks.”

Ed stood abruptly and paced towards the door. “Did he say who?” He asked, voice tight with anger, even though he could guess well enough.

“He didn’t say anything Ed. Not a word.”
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

As you'll notice in this chapter, I'm taking some liberties regarding how forensics and reporting are handled, hopefully it doesn't detract too much from the story.

Spike was lying on his side near the edge of the bed when Sam entered. His eyes sought out Sam’s face, relaxing when he realised who it was.

“Hey Spike, Greg sent me to keep you company. And to let the grown-ups talk. You mind if I sit?” He gestured to the edge of the bed.

Spike nodded tiredly, moving back a little to give Sam space. Even that small movement seemed to cause him pain.

Sam had an idea what was wrong but it solidified starkly in his mind when Spike moved and the blanket slipped, revealing a red welt on his arm.

“Spike, I need to see.” He kept his voice quiet and gentle but Spike’s eyes widened nonetheless.

Sam gestured to the covers. “Can I…” Spike nodded slowly and Sam gently drew the blankets down to Spike’s waist. He was wearing the sleep shirt and pants Sam had given Greg. The shirt was short sleeved, the bruises standing out starkly on Spike’s arms.

Sam frowned, reached a hand out and running his thumb lightly over a purpled patch of skin.

“Alec is usually more careful.” Spike spoke up hoarsely. “Nothing that shows. But he lost his temper.”

He shifted again in discomfort and his shirt rode up an inch or two, revealing a discoloured area of skin on his back. Sam couldn’t stop himself, he reached a hand out and pushed the shirt up gently, observing the marred skin of Spike’s back with horrified fascination.

Spike’s hand pushed him away with more force than he’d expected, a pained grunt from Spike at the effort.

“Sorry Spike. I’m so sorry. Here.” He drew the blankets back up, covering Spike up to his shoulders and using his thumb to wipe the few errant tears from Spike’s cheeks.

“It’s okay, Sam.” Spike’s voice was barely more than a whisper as he let his eyes close. “It’s what I deserve.”

***

Ed made the call to Rolie, who listened carefully then passed the phone to Carolyn. Ed gave an abbreviated version of events as they knew them and she readily agreed to come, promising to be there within the hour.

Then he sat back down with Greg and they tried to come up with the most logical next step. “We
need to get Spike to talk. Otherwise, we won’t know what to do next.” Greg said and Ed knew he was right. That was what it came down to.

Sam opened the door and came out to join them. “He’s asleep.”

He sat next to Ed on the couch. “He admitted it was Alec who hurt him. Said he lost his temper. And…” Sam trailed off.

“And what Sam? We need to know.” Ed added, when Sam hesitated.

“Spike said it was what he deserved.”

It was Greg’s turn to stand and pace. “I need to talk to him again. Get an idea what’s going on in that head of his. I feel like there’s a lot we’re missing here.” He started for the door to the spare room.

Ed jumped up, reaching out and catching hold of Greg’s sleeve. “He’s sleeping for now, let’s let him rest. Carolyn will be here in an hour and we need him settled or he might not let her near him. Talking can wait. He’s not going anywhere and right now, neither is Alec.”

***

Spike was uncomfortably warm. He shifted, moaning as pain spread through him once more. Someone called his name softly. He opened his eyes.

“Hey Spike, it’s Greg. There’s someone here to see you.”

He had the sudden thought that it was Alec, that they’d brought him here to take Spike away. Spike was more his responsibility than theirs now and Alec knew how to give him what he deserved.

“Alec?” He asked.

“No, Spike, no. Alec’s not here and he doesn’t know you’re here either.” Greg reassured, looking confused. “Do you remember Rolie’s wife Carolyn? She’s a doctor. We asked her to come and check you over.”

No. Spike didn’t want a doctor, didn’t want anyone looking at him, touching him. Poking and prodding. Asking questions. He shook his head adamantly at Greg.

“Spike, if you don’t let Carolyn check you over, we’ll have to take you to the hospital. I’m sorry buddy, but we need to make sure you’re okay.”

Spike conceded, letting himself lie back down on the bed with a sigh.

“I’m gonna be with you the whole time, okay?” Greg reassured as he went to the door and ushered Carolyn in.

***

Greg kept out of the way for the most part, letting Carolyn work. She was good, establishing some fragile trust with Spike as she took his vital signs, warning him about everything she was going to do and checking he was comfortable.

Greg stepped in to help Spike undress and caught the expression that briefly crossed Carolyn’s face when she saw the extent of the injuries to Spike’s back. She worked swiftly, cleaning wounds and putting a few paper stitches across the worst of the welts, some of which had reopened from Spike moving around and were bleeding sluggishly. She kept Spike covered with the blankets as much as
possible as she worked and let him leave his boxers on. Towards the end of the exam, she leaned over and had a whispered conversation with Spike before she turned to Greg.

“Greg, would you give us a few minutes please?”

“Spike, are you comfortable with that?” Greg asked, waiting until Spike looked up at him and nodded.

“Okay, I’ll be right outside the door if you need me.” He left, closing the door after him and leaning against it, listening out for any sign he was needed.

***

Carolyn was nice. Calm with steady hands that weren’t too cold. As she examined Spike top to toe, she checked frequently that he was okay, making sure to meet his eyes each time she asked the question. As they neared the end, she leaned over and spoke close to his ear. “Spike, I need to examine the rest of you now. Do you want to ask Greg to step out for that?” Spike nodded, feeling heat suffuse his cheeks. Carolyn spoke to Greg and then there was the sound of the door closing.

Carolyn pulled a chair next to the bed and sat. She spoke like they had all the time in the world. “Do you think you can tell me what happened?” She asked gently, warm brown eyes meeting his.

He took a breath to speak, but no words came out. Carolyn nodded understandingly.

“Okay, that’s okay Spike. Maybe I can ask some questions and you can nod for yes or shake your head for no. Does that sound okay?” Spike nodded.

“Did someone hurt you?” An easy question. He nodded.

“Someone you know?” Another, less certain, nod.

“Did they use a belt on your back?” Spike nodded again, feeling embarrassment heat his cheeks. He’d been beaten like a misbehaving child.

“And were your arms tied up?” He started to feel like one of those nodding dog ornaments people had in their cars.

“Okay, Spike. Here’s a difficult one but it’s really important. Were you sexually assaulted?”

Spike froze at the words, even though he’d known they were coming. He had the sudden memory of Alec’s hands on his thighs, gripping painfully. His nod, when it came, was a jerky, graceless movement.

“Spike, you’re doing really well. Can you answer another question for me?”

He nodded wearily.

“Honey, were you raped?”

He’d known the question was inevitable as much as he knew the answer was. He had said no, said stop, said please, but Alec had done it anyway. Had hurt him.

He managed one word, its weight heavy on his shoulders. “Yes.”

“Okay Spike, I’m going to examine you now.”
He put himself into the hands of this kind, almost stranger, and tried not to think too much.

***

Carolyn came out of the room almost an hour later. She waved Greg over, moving towards the kitchen so they could speak quietly.

“His injuries aren’t life-threatening and he can get away without a hospital. You know I used to work in the sexual assault centre at the Women’s College hospital?”

Greg shook his head, he hadn’t realised that.

“I’m certified to carry out post-assault examinations. I always carry a kit on hand. The sooner the victims get that done, the sooner they can shower.”

“Are you saying Spike…” She nodded, confirming what he already suspected.

“I’ve completed the kit and taken photographs, with Spike’s permission of course. I reassured him that this doesn’t mean he is obliged to report anything or press charges against anyone, but it’s easier for all concerned if you take this first step anyway.”

Greg nodded. “What do we do now?”

“I’m writing him a prescription for painkillers and antibiotics as a precaution. Some of the cuts on his back are looking inflamed and he has a slight temperature. I’ve prescribe some laxatives in case he needs them, things will be sore inside for a while, so the less strain the better. He needs lots of rest and fluids. Keep him warm. Try and get him to eat small, light meals regularly. From looking at him I’d say he’s lost weight recently, his stomach might struggle to handle too much.”

“What about screening for STDs?” Greg asked.

“I’ve taken some swabs and bloods to go to the general lab. Spike assures me that his…” Carolyn seemed to hesitate on which word to choose. “…attacker was given a clean bill of health less than three months ago, he saw the proof himself, so he has no significant concerns there. But obviously it’s better to be safe than sorry.”

Before Greg could ask, she clarified about the kit. “I’ll drop the kit into the forensics laboratory, an officer accepts receipt, preserving the chain of evidence. It is assigned a unique number. It stays sealed, and is stored, until there’s a request to process it.”

She put her coat on and buttoned it.

“I’ll call back tomorrow to check on Spike. If he decides he wants to report the assault, there’s an officer called Elena Havers in the sex crimes unit. I’ve worked with her before, she’s really good with victims, especially people in Spike’s position. Give her a call.”

Carolyn reached out a hand and squeezed Greg’s shoulder. “And don’t be too hard on yourselves. It’s often the ones you least suspect who fall victim to people like that.”

***

When Carolyn left, Greg filled them in on what she’d said. Ed had guessed most of it but Sam hadn’t realised the nature of what Alec had done to Spike. He went pale, blue eyes shocked and he sat down abruptly, struggling to process. After a minute he jumped to his feet, taking the prescription Carolyn had left. Greg and Ed tried to stop him from leaving but he insisted, saying he needed some
air and would find a late night pharmacy to fill the prescription, promising to stop and get them all some food on his way back.

Ed went in to see Spike. He was lying on his side, curled in on himself, asleep. He looked young and vulnerable.

He pulled up a chair next to the bed and sat beside him, watching. At first Spike seemed peaceful but then he started to move, twisting his head back and forth. He whimpered and struggled, fighting an unseen enemy.

“Spike, buddy, it’s just a bad dream. Wake up now.” Ed cajoled.

It didn’t work and Spike’s struggles became more violent. “Alec no, please. Stop. It hurts.” Spike’s voice was pleading and Ed froze at the telling words. Then Spike jerked up, eyes open, awake and aware. “Ed?”

“Hi Spike.” Ed reached for him but Spike pulled back with a flinch and a whimper, frightened eyes watching him.

“Hey, no. No buddy, I am not gonna hurt you.” He spoke slowly, voice gentle, trying to keep the shock from his voice.

“Easy.” He reached out again with slow movements. Spike watched warily. “Easy buddy, it’s just me, and you know I won’t hurt you.” He let his hand settle lightly on Spike’s shoulder, reassured when Spike didn’t flinch at his touch and relaxed under Ed’s hand after a long moment. Ed used his other hand to gently cup Spike’s chin, as tears gathered in the bomb tech’s eyes.

“You’re safe, Spike. I promise. I won’t let anyone hurt you.” He kept his voice quiet and gentle, barely louder than a whisper.

Then, because the weight of the guilt was just too much.

“I’m sorry I wasn’t there to stop this. I should have seen it buddy, weeks ago, we all should have.”

Spike shook his head hard, pulling his chin from Ed's hand, and dislodging tears which slipped down his face.

“I deserved it. I didn’t want you to stop it.”

“Deserved it? Buddy, I don’t understand.” He used a calloused thumb to wipe tears from Spike's cheeks.

“I’m being punished for my mistakes. For letting Lou die, for not being good enough for the team, for the three of you. It's what I deserve.”

“Oh Spike.” Greg spoke up from the doorway where he’d been standing silently, watching them. “No one deserves this, least of all you.”
Greg stepped slowly into the room, sitting on the edge of the bed next to Spike.

“Why would you think you deserve to be hurt?” He was careful to keep his tone one of neutral curiosity, not wanting Spike to be scared off by the anger that simmered beneath the surface.

Spike didn’t answer, eyes dropping to stare at the blanket beneath his fingers. He couldn’t hide a yawn and it set Ed off. Greg found himself struggling to hide his own yawn.

“Okay, it’s been a long day and we’re all tired. Sam will be back soon with your meds and some food. Then we’ll all get some sleep and talk again in the morning.”

“We’re on shift tomorrow.” Spike’s protest was half hearted, he knew the reality well enough.

“Spike, you’re not going to be able for work for a while, not until you heal up.” Greg kept his voice gentle.

“Am I off the team?” The words were quiet and, to Greg’s eyes, Spike looked resigned to his fate.

“We’re not letting you go without a fight.”

Spike looked up then, surprised by the intensity of his words. Greg made no promises but let his words show whose side he was on.

He yawned again, eyes slipping closed. “Here buddy, let’s get you lying down.” Ed said, as he helped manoeuvre Spike back onto the pillows. “Sleep for a bit, we’ll wake you for your meds.”

***

They waited until Spike had drifted back to sleep before decamping to the living room, leaving the bedroom door open so they’d hear him if he needed them.

“I’ll call Holleran first thing, see if he can roster one of the other teams to take our shift. Then we’re off for the weekend so that gives us some time to sort out how we’re going to handle this.”

Before Ed could reply, the front door opened and Sam stepped inside, two carrier bags in hand. He laid them down on the table. “I got Spike’s meds. Pharmacist said he should take the antibiotics with food. I got him some chicken broth and some plain rice. Wasn’t sure which would be better.

Ed pulled a glass from the cabinet and filled it with water from the tap before rifling through the bag from the pharmacy. “How long since his last pain meds Sam?”

Sam paused from where he was pouring broth into a mug and peered tiredly at his watch. “Nearly five hours.”

“Good, so he can have the antibiotics and the pain meds now. And some food.”

There was a creak of the door and all three men looked up, alert. Spike stood in the doorway of the bedroom.
“Spike, buddy, you shouldn’t be up.” Greg moved towards him, ready to herd him back to bed.

“I need the bathroom.”

“Okay, let me help…”

He waved Greg off. “I can manage”. Then walked slowly towards the bathroom door, shutting it behind him.

When he reappeared a few minutes later, he shuffled over to the couch instead of back to bed. “Spike, you need to rest.” Greg gently admonished.

“It hurts too much to lie down.” He mumbled, even though he winced as he sat.

“Well some painkillers and antibiotics should help that.” Ed said, holding the bag up for Spike to see. “But you need some food in your stomach first.”

Spike shook his head. “I’m not hungry.”

“Just some chicken broth or rice. Nothing too heavy. Otherwise the meds will make you sick.” Greg tried.

When Spike didn’t reply, he took it as a concession. Sam carried over the mug of broth and placed it in Spike’s hands, waiting until he had a good grip of the cup before letting go, his hands lingering on Spike’s.

“Just try a little bit, please.” Sam said, then moved back to give Spike some space.

Spike slowly raised the cup to his mouth and took a small sip. Then another. He shivered a little, the shirt he wore thin in the cool air. All three of them noticed, Ed disappearing into the bedroom and returning with a blanket while Sam got up to turn the heating up.

“Here, I’m gonna put this around your shoulders so you don’t get too cold.” Ed explained, making sure Spike could see him before letting the soft material surround him. They were all learning to be cautious. Spike was skittish and wary. It didn’t sit naturally on their normally energetic team mate.

Spike used one hand to pull the blanket tighter, taking another sip of broth.

“What happens now?” He asked out of nowhere. Unsure of what he meant, Greg gave the most immediate answer.

“You eat something, take your meds then go back to bed and get some sleep.”

“No, I mean… what happens now, about all of this?” He let go of the blanket and gestured to himself as he spoke, leaving Greg in no doubt of his meaning.

“That depends on you, buddy. Do you want to make a statement? Because we can arrange that.” Ed tried.

Spike didn’t reply, staring pensively at the mug in his hands.

“There isn’t any proof.” The four words were so quiet, even Sam sitting beside him struggled to hear them.

“But Spike, I mean, just look at you, you’re…” Sam trailed off.
“All he has to say is that it was all consensual, and then it’s my word against his. We’re both professionals, both of good standing. It’ll be he said, he said and you know how those cases go.” Spike spoke with quiet resignation.

“But you didn’t consent to this, did you?” Greg asked the question tentatively, aware that some of what Spike had already told them suggested otherwise.

“I didn’t always say no. Sometimes I was just too tired or I knew it would make things worse. And sometimes I thought I deserved it, when he was rough with me. But this?” He held up his arms, bruises standing out stark in the light of the room. “I didn’t say yes to this. I said no, kept saying no, over and over but he just…”

Sam reached out and caught the mug of broth before it could spill, setting it down on the table. Spike leaned forward, bringing his knees up and wrapping his arms around them before tucking his head down. His shoulders heaved with quiet sobs.

“Hey,” Sam inched closer, voice quiet. He hesitantly reached out a hand, laying it across Spike’s shoulders. Apart from a hitch in his sobs, there was no other response so Sam moved closer. When he tugged gently, Spike uncurled, letting Sam guide him so he was pressed against Sam’s chest.

“You’re okay. We’ve got you. We’re right here, all three of us.”

“But you weren’t. And he was so pissed off that I stayed with you.” Spike’s voice was distorted with tears but they could understand him. “Kept accusing me of cheating on him. With you, and with Ed when I told him we’d stayed late training.”

Sam’s hand ran gently up and down Spike’s upper arm as Spike clutched his shirt, tears wetting the fabric.

“I thought I’d talked him around, thought he’d calmed down but he… he…” Spike’s words dissolved into heaving sobs again.

Greg and Ed had moved closer. Greg cautiously taking a seat next to Spike and Ed sitting on the coffee table. While they didn’t want to push, if Spike wanted to talk, they’d listen.

“I can’t report it.” Spike said suddenly, sounding certain. Before any of them could voice the question, he answered it.

“He knows, about the night we… That night after Lou died.”

“You told him?” Sam asked. Spike nodded against his chest. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to. It was early on when things were still good and Alec was the best thing in my life. After Lou, after… He knew I’d been hurt by someone and he asked and I needed someone to talk to…” He shrugged his shoulders helplessly. “So he knows. Threw it back in my face more times than I can count. How I hadn’t been good enough for you but he was more tolerant, willing to help me become better for him.” He laughed bitterly through his tears, pulling away from Sam’s chest briefly to make eye contact with Ed and then Greg. “But I was never good enough for him either.”

He let his head fall back against Sam's chest, tears making tracks down his face.

“So I can’t report it or he’ll make sure everyone knows about that night and it’ll ruin all our lives, all our careers, instead of just mine.” He spoke with a pained sigh.

“Spike. We’re not going to ask you to keep quiet about this to protect us. We can weather this. He doesn’t have proof of what you told him, it’ll just look like the desperate accusations of a guilty
man.” Ed reasoned.

“No, you know what those rumours are like. If it gets out there, it’ll do damage, to all of you. You shouldn’t have to suffer for my mistakes.”

“We’ve all made mistakes buddy. And no one deserves to go through what you went through. No one.” Ed said firmly.

Spike sighed tiredly, sagging against Sam’s chest. They could see the outburst had cost him dearly in energy, pain already draining him.

“Here.” Ed handed his mug of broth over. “Drink a little more of this. Then meds and back to bed.”

Sam took the mug when Spike didn’t reach for it, and held it to his lips, helping him take sips. It took effort for him to keep his eyes open.

When he’d managed two-thirds of the mug, Sam declared it to be enough and Ed coaxed Spike awake enough to take his pills with a few swallows of water.

“Now, let’s get you to bed.” Ed said, but he gestured to Greg to take the lead. Greg had been holding back since Spike’s admission, quiet and pensive. Ed worried about what was going through his head.

Greg caught on quickly, helping Spike to his feet and supporting him as they walked back to the guest room. Spike was asleep almost as soon as his head hit the pillow. Greg watched him for a while, stroking the hair from his forehead absentmindedly.

Out in the living space, Sam was reheating their food. Greg moved to sit tiredly on the couch, Ed taking a seat next to him.

“What’s on your mind Greg?”

“What Spike said. About the three of us. This is all because of that night together. That’s how this got started.”

“We don’t know that, Spike didn’t say that.” Ed started to argue.

“I wish I had stopped it, Ed. I should have. I was the only sober one there.” He looked stricken and Ed reached a hand to comfort him only to have Greg shake him off.

“I need some air. Need to do some thinking. Will you stay here, with Sam and Spike? I don’t want them here alone, in case this Alec guy decides to show up.”

“Sure, I’ll be here. But Greg, it’s the middle of the night. Stay, get some rest. We’re all exhausted.” His arguments fell on deaf ears as Greg picked up his jacket and headed for the door.

“At least take my car.” Ed said, pulling the keys from his pocket. Greg turned around and Ed tossed them to him. “Keep your phone on. And don’t do anything Wordy wouldn’t do.” Because Wordy would play it smart. Wordy wouldn’t go after Alec, as much as he might have wanted to.

Chapter End Notes

Thinly papered over plot hole anyone? *Whistles innocently* I’m sure no one noticed
through all the angst and tears.
Ed slept in the chair next to Spike’s bed, sending Sam to get some rest and promising he’d call him if he needed him. Spike slept soundly with the pain relief the doctor had prescribed.

Ed sent a message to Greg, feeling his tension rise when no reply was forthcoming. He was about to call when a message appeared on his phone. “At Sam’s door. Can you let me in?”

He opened it to find Greg, body drenched from the rain, looked lost and bedraggled. It was a mismatch to his words.

“I have a plan, Eddie.”

They sat on the couch, leaving Spike’s door open to they could hear him and Greg explained his idea while drying off with a towel.

It had turned out Spike wasn’t exactly right in what he’d said. Alec had a previous charge against him for assault of an ex-boyfriend. It had been on the lesser end of the scale and he’d got community service but it was still something.

“It’s not going to be enough Greg, you know that. If he gets a half decent lawyer, they’ll block any mention of his previous conviction in court.”

“I know that. But from what Spike has said, Alec is temperamental and jealous. Of us, especially. He thinks Spike has put us on a pedestal and doesn’t think he can compare to that.”

“So what do you have in mind?”

“Just a heart to heart.”

“You, alone?” Ed's scepticism was clear.

“Do you think you can put your emotions aside enough to handle this any better?” Greg challenged.

“Can you?” Ed pushed back.

“It won’t be easy, but I can and will do this for Spike. A confession from Alec would spare him a trial. Spare him further pain.”

He held up a hand to stop Ed’s protest.

“First, I need to speak to Spike again, learn as much about Alec as I can. I’ve spoken to Commander Holleran, our shift today is covered, and he has someone in mind to join us while Spike recuperates.”

“You really think Spike will be able to pick up the pieces?”

“I told him we weren’t letting him go without a fight. I meant it.”

***

A bleary eyed Sam appeared in the living room a while later.

“Spike?” he asked.
“Still sleeping peacefully.”

“Good.” He sat down, rubbing his eyes with the heels of his hands.

“Sam, I need some time to talk to Spike, once he’s awake. I was hoping you and Ed might head out for a few hours, give us a bit of space.”

Sam was clearly reluctant but he agreed. As he and Ed left, Greg made some toast and poured a glass of water, knowing it was time for Spike’s medication. He carried it into the bedroom.

“Spike, buddy. Time to wake up.”

Spike, deeply asleep, didn’t stir. Greg gave his shoulder a gentle shake.

“What Alexei? Is it time to get up?” He mumbled.

“It’s Greg, Spike. It’s time for your meds. I’ve made you some toast.”

Confused eyes opened and peered at him. Greg saw the moment Spike recalled the previous night and he suddenly couldn’t meet Greg’s eyes.

“Hey, none of that now. You have nothing to be ashamed of.”

Spike fixed with him with a disbelieving stare. “What, you think you’re the first officer to go through something like this?” Spike looked away.

“Eat up, your toast is getting cold and you need to take your antibiotic.”

Spike slowly chewed his way through a slice of toast before pushing the plate away. Greg doled out his tablets and handed him the water to wash them down.

“Spike, there are some things we need to talk about.” His words raised instant wariness on Spike’s face.

“Hey, it’s just me here. Don’t look so scared.” He reached out to Spike’s hand, and squeezed gently. Spike bit his lip before replying. “What do you want to talk about?”

“Well, how about we start from the beginning, how did you meet Alexei?”

Spike was silent for so long that Greg thought he wasn’t going to answer.

“I met him a few weeks after Lou died, a week after the night we…” He left the rest unsaid. “He works in a security firm, I spoke to him during one of our calls, about a particular security system. He was really helpful so I called him back to thank him and he asked me out.”

Spike traced patterns along the bed covers, a small smile gracing his face. “At first, it was nice. He was nice. He treated me like I mattered, like I was worthy of his attention and I really needed that. And I told him… about Lou, about the night with you and the guys. Told him a few others things too. Trusted him.”

“I don’t even remember how it started. He’d make comments when I was late, twist things to make it seem like it was my fault. It was little things, hard to pin down. He can be so cold and cruel sometimes, but he always apologises and makes up for it. And he’s charming around my family, my parent’s think the world of him.”
“But the bad times just keep getting worse and the good times fewer and far between. And I’ve made so many mistakes. It just feels like I’m getting what I deserve, you know? I don’t deserve a nice, caring boyfriend. I’ve earned the stuff he does to me.”

Greg moved closer until he could see Spike’s face, repeating words from the previous night. “No one deserves that, Spike. You least of all.”

“But Lou…” Spike’s face crumbled, tears in his eyes.

Greg moved to sit on the side of the bed, pulling Spike into his arms. “Lou’s death was not your fault. You did everything you could. You never stopped trying. Lou loved you so much, he wasn’t willing to risk your life trying to save him.”

He gave Spike a moment to digest his words, surprised when Spike spoke up.

“That night we went home with you, I really thought things were going to be okay. For the first time since Lou, I could see how things might get better.”

Spike spoke with his face pressed to Greg’s chest, tears wetting his shirt.

“I’d… I’d wanted you all for so long. It was like a dream come true to learn you wanted me too. But I wasn’t good enough for you. I was a mistake.”

Hearing the words coming from Spike made Greg’s heart break.

He pulled away to look at Spike’s face, only for Spike to retreat from him, closing off and curling in on himself. Perceiving another rejection, Greg realised. He reached a hand out to cup Spike’s chin, lifting his head so their eyes met.

“That wasn’t what I meant Spike. I meant we had rushed into something in the height of our grief. It was a misjudgement on all our parts but mine especially. You were drunk and grieving. We took advantage of you. And I very much regret that. I don’t regret…” he pulled the younger man back into an embrace. “I don’t regret admitting how I felt about you. That night… you were amazing. More that I could ever have anticipated. Under different circumstances, I know I’d have felt differently about the aftermath. I’ve made so many mistakes in my life, buddy. Ruined a lot of relationships. I didn’t want to ruin what I already had with you, with Sam and Ed.”

Spike’s hand was clinging to his shirt, face pressed into his chest. He was crying again. “It wasn’t me?” He asked through his tears. Tears were making their way down Greg’s face too. “No.” He shook his head as he held his teammate close. “It wasn’t you Spike. It was never you. You did nothing wrong buddy. I am so sorry.”

He rocked Spike slowly back and forth, rubbing a hand across his back. Eventually Spike’s sobs died down and he took slow hiccuping breaths. When he spoke, his words surprised Greg.

“It wasn’t your fault, either. You’re right. That wasn’t the time to start anything. I was all over the place with Lou, not thinking straight, barely sleeping or eating. I should have talked to you about that night…”

“That part is my fault, Spike. I couldn’t handle the guilt after we’d slept together and I pushed you away. Shut down any attempt to talk about it. It wasn’t fair or right on any of you.”

He spoke quietly into Spike’s ear. “Now we need your help, okay? We can’t fix this, can’t change what’s happened but we can do our best to get you justice and help you recover.”
“What do you need?” Spike asked, sounding curious for the first time.

“I need you to tell me more about Alec.” Spike shuddered at the name, pulling away to look Greg in the eyes. “You have a plan?” he asked. Greg nodded. “We have a plan.”

***

Ed drove them to his place in silence. As they pulled up outside, Sam started to speak.

“The boss wasn’t wrong. We did make a mistake that night. A stupid, drunken mistake. None of us were in the frame of mind to be making rational decisions, even him. But he didn’t start it, I did. I’d been thinking about it since I’d met Spike and it was stupid because a one night thing wasn’t what I wanted. And now…”

He shrugged his shoulders helplessly. “How did we let this happen?”

Ed reached over and put a hand on Sam’s shoulder. “Hey, whatever we may have done, we didn’t let this happen. Yeah, we should’ve been keeping a closer eye on Spike, should have noticed what was going on with him sooner, but the only person to blame here is Alec. And he will pay.”

“Do you really think the plan will work?”

“If anyone can pull it off, Greg can.”

***

Spike was dozing again, exhausted from all the talking. Greg had worked out the details of the plan, with Spike’s reluctant agreement, and had called Ed and Sam.

Spike gave him Alexei’s phone number and, on Greg’s gentle prompting, helped him compose a message to tell Alexei he was staying with Sam. Greg sent it as Sam and Ed arrived back. There was an element of musical chairs to the plan, Greg waking Spike, putting him in the car with Sam, and sending them to his house. Ed remained behind with Greg. They had recording equipment set up and ready to go. Ed agreed to stay out of sight but insisted on being nearby in case things escalated.

Alec had text back almost immediately, asking for Sam’s address, and Greg had sent it. It was a tense wait for his arrival and Greg found himself pacing the floors. This was one confrontation he was dreading. There was a lot riding on the outcome and he’d only have once chance to get it right.
They drove in silence, Sam casting worried glances at Spike now and then. “You and Greg talked?” he said eventually. Spike nodded, turning his head to look out the window. He was wearing some of Sam’s clothes, seeming swamped in them.

“I wanted to apologise. About that night. I shouldn’t have started something, it was the wrong time. It wasn’t fair on you and I…”

“Sam, it’s okay. I remember that night. I was one hundred percent into it. I didn’t regret what we did. I just didn’t handle what happened afterwards. I took the rejection personally and I guess I made some bad choices.”

“We all made those.” Sam agreed. “If I could go back, do things over, I’d move that night a few months forward in time. Give us some space after Lou.”

“You’d do it again?” Spike seemed genuinely surprised.

“Sure. Come on, you have to know I’m still mad about you? I have been since a month after I joined the SRU.”

When Spike looked at him askance, Sam couldn’t help his next words, regretting them almost as soon as they’d passed his lips. “You really believed all that crap Alec's been telling you, didn’t you? God, I wish I’d seen this sooner…”

“This isn’t your fault.” Spike said, sounding certain. “It’s his.”

Sam gave him a sideways glance.

“I’m not okay Sam, not by a long-shot, but I am seeing things clearer than I have in a while.”

“Wait ‘til you heal up and get your strength back. You’ll be Team One’s supergeek.” Sam grinned at his own joke, happy when he coaxed a smile out of Spike.

“I think calling me supergeek constitutes some form of harassment.” Spike frowned at Sam in mock disapproval.

“Right. Sorry. Our geek with combat skills. I remember.”

“That’s better.” Spike yawned, letting his head rest against the window.

“We’re almost there, Spike. Then you can go back to bed.”

“But I’m not tired, Ma.” He whined, a smile on his face.

“That one might work on Greg, but it won’t work on me.” Sam teased.
There was a confident knock on the door.

Greg steeled himself, then went to answer.

“You’re not Sam.” The man standing at the door said. He was tall, muscular enough to suggest he worked out but not to SRU level. He looked Greg up and down, sneering at what he saw. “I’m here to collect Mike. I’m his partner, Alexei. Alexei Ryod.” There was a faint whiff of alcohol from his breath.

“I’m Greg Parker. You’d better come in.” Greg said, stepping back. Alec strode in, keen eyes taking in the empty living room and kitchen.

“Mike isn’t here, Alexei.”

“He has to be. He sent me this address.” He went to the first door he saw, opening it, taking in the empty bathroom.

“He’s not here.” Greg said again. “Why don’t you come and sit down, and we’ll talk.”

“You’re lying. Of course he’s here.” He opened the door to the guest bedroom, taking two steps into the room, then stepping back out. The last door was Sam’s bedroom, where Ed was hiding. Alexei strode to it, flinging the door open, and Greg thought they were done. No way Alexei would talk with two of them there. He’d smell the set up a mile away.

But the room was empty. Ed in the closet maybe? The inappropriate pun nearly brought a smile to his face but he was quickly brought back to Earth by Alec’s voice.

“Where’s Mike? I need to talk to him.”

“Are you sure he wants to talk to you?” Greg asked, keeping his voice calm and non-confrontational. “I don’t know what he’s told you. Yeah, we had an argument, but that’s normal. All couples do.”

“You don’t sit down for a bit. I’ve been worried about Mike for a while, it would be nice to get some idea what’s been going on with him.”

He could see the look in Alec’s eyes. Alec saw an opportunity, the chance for further manipulation. And he was the kind of person who couldn’t resist.

He sat on the couch, legs folded, presenting a confident exterior. He didn't hesitate to stick the knife in, metaphorically speaking.

“Well, as I’m sure you know, Mike’s been struggling since your teammate Lewis died. I met him shortly after that. He was a mess, but patience and love have helped. He still struggles. Nightmares and all that. And he has trouble with reliability. I’m sure you’ve noticed that on the job as well, not being where he says he will, not doing what he promises to do. I’ve been working on that with him. Helping him be better.”

Greg let himself nod along to Alec’s diatribe, seeing clearly the narcissistic traits he'd suspected were there. He played along. “You must have your hands full keeping him in line. I know I’m having to work hard to keep his nose to the grindstone.”

“Yeah, he needs firm handling. Sometimes I know better than he does what he needs.” He paused
then, seeming to think better of the direction the conversation was headed, eyes appraising Greg before giving a sharp twist to the metaphorical knife he'd stabbed him with.

“You know what really messed him up though, was the night with the three of you. God, he was so mad about you. You were his every dream come true. Then you threw him away, dashed all his hopes with five measly words. “Last night was a mistake.” You don’t know how those words have haunted him.”

No, after last night, Greg did, he truly did. And those words would haunt him for a long time to come too. But he didn’t let himself rise to Alec’s bait.

“We all made mistakes after we lost Lou. But the more I think on it, the more I realise that that wasn’t one. That was just four people, four adults, grieving and taking comfort from one another.”

Alec seemed to bristle at his words and Greg knew this was the time to push.

“Our mistake was letting him go.”

Alec’s eyes narrowed. “So that’s your game, is it? Here to warn me off?”

“No, it’s always been Spike’s choice who he dates. And he hasn’t so much as looked at me since that night.”

“But you don’t think I’m good enough, is that it? Don’t think I measure up compared to you?”

Alec’s temper was fraying around the edges. He was struggling to keep control, his jealousy clearly visible. Greg pushed another millimetre.

“If you were, I suspect you wouldn’t need to use such firm handling to keep Spike in line.”

“Like you’ve never had to use force to prove a point?” Alec scoffed.

“Never with Spike.” Greg replied plainly.

“Well what do you expect? He spends all his time with you, in and outside of work. Then he’s always telling me he’s too tired or too sore. Sometimes he needs to be shown that that’s not a way to treat someone you love.”

“So the bruises…” Greg leaves the sentence open ended and lets Alec fill in the blanks.

“Sometimes I need to impress on him how his behaviour makes me feel. And even then, he ignores me, preferring to spend all his time with his beloved Sam or with Ed, who he idolises.”

“That would piss me off.” Greg agreed.

“Yeah, I’d say it would at that. He’s a slow learner sometimes, and harsher lessons hold better. My father taught me that.”

“Is that why you used the belt on Mike? Was that something your father did?”

“Oh yeah, my dad was fond of the belt. I mean, I didn’t want to use it on Mike, it gave me no pleasure, but he’d betrayed me. He needed to understand he was mine. A little pain and sex just to serve as a reminder.”

“He lie down and take it? Mike’s always had a stubborn streak.” Greg schooled his face and voice to idol curiosity, hiding the emotions Alec’s words were evoking in him.
“Did he hell. Had to hold him down to hit him with the belt, then pretty much tie his arms and pin him down to remind him who he belonged to. I’m sure he was sore after, but the lesson was learned. At least, I thought it had been, but he was supposed to wait for me, and he didn’t. Instead, I find he’s here again, with Sam. Playing me like a fool.”

“He likes it rough?” Greg asked, trying not to get back onto the subject of Spike’s current location.

Alec laughed, shaking his head. “I suppose you wouldn’t know, would you? Hates it. Always telling me to stop, trying to push me away, trying to get up. Needs a little persuasion. Best times are when he’s too tired to do more than make little helpless sounds while I fuck him. You know he doesn’t want it but he can’t do anything about it. That’s the one advantage of your long shifts.”

Greg forced himself to keep his expression neutral. His stomach wanted to heave at Alec’s words, at the confirmation of what he suspected Spike had been going through.

“And you’d told him to wait for you? The morning he called in sick?”

Alec nodded, dark eyes flashing with anger. “I suppose you wouldn’t know, would you? Hates it. Always telling me to stop, trying to push me away, trying to get up. Needs a little persuasion. Best times are when he’s too tired to do more than make little helpless sounds while I fuck him. You know he doesn’t want it but he can’t do anything about it. That’s the one advantage of your long shifts.”

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Alec began to look uncertain. “Yeah, well Mike would never betray me like that. And even if he did, it would be his word against mine.” He didn’t sound as confident as his words suggested.

He stood abruptly, Greg following suit. “Tell Mike I’ll be waiting to hear from him. And tell him to call his Ma. She’s worried.”

With that, he headed for the door, slamming it closed as he left.

A heavy silence fell across the room before the bedroom door creaked open. He looked up to find Ed watching him with concern before he crossed the room, wrapping arms around him. “You were right.” He murmured, close to Greg’s ear. “I couldn’t have done that and kept my cool. I don’t know how you managed.”

“Because I had to. For Spike. Still, I don’t know if it’ll be enough.” Greg admitted, letting himself give in to the comfort of Ed’s warm embrace.

“We need to get Spike’s basement checked out. If Alec hasn’t taken the time to straighten it up, there’ll be evidence there to back up Spike’s story. And he needs to make a statement. I’ll call Elena Havers, the officer Carolyn recommended.”

Spike had agreed that, if they could get Alec to admit what he’d done, and record it, he’d make a statement too.

***

The rest of the afternoon passed by in a blur. Greg called Sam and told him what had happened with
Alec while Ed made the call to Elena Havers. She agreed to handle the case with the utmost discretion and to send someone to Spike’s parents house immediately to secure what was now being labelled a crime scene.

They split up then, Greg going to see Spike’s parents, before the officers arrived, to give them some warning. He kept his explanation brief. Just that Alec had injured Spike but Spike was okay. There weren’t convinced by his calming words so he’d had to get Spike on the phone to talk to them, seeing the reassurance they got from hearing their son’s voice. He left quickly after that, not wanting to interfere with the officers and the crime scene technicians.

By the time he arrived back at his place, Spike was giving a statement to Detective Havers and had given permission for the evidence Carolyn had collected to be processed.

They handed over the recording of the conversation with Alexei and Greg made a short statement confirming the circumstances of the recording.

He spoke briefly to Detective Havers as she was leaving. Ed had made her aware of the complication, the only card Alec had to play.

“That’s everything for now. We’ll request a warrant for Mr. Ryod’s arrest and a subpoena for his DNA and fingerprints to compare against the evidence. I’m sure you have a lot of questions but really the less you know right now the better. I will tell you that the crime scene doesn’t appear to have been disturbed. We found the weapon used to inflict Officer Scarlatti’s injuries. That makes an assault charge a lot more straightforward. I’ll be in touch over the next few days.”

“That you, Detective Havers. We really appreciate your help. Just once piece of advice.”

“Oh?” She looked at him with a raised eyebrow.

“Alexei has some strong narcissistic traits. You’ll hear it on the tape. He had no qualms discussing in detail what he did to Spike because he was so certain he had us all over a barrel. Play him right, give him just enough rope…”

“And he’ll hang himself. I’ll do my best Sergeant Parker.”

He understood why Carolyn had recommended her. She had handled cases involving officers before and understood how they could be detrimental to careers and livelihoods. She couldn’t promise them confidentiality but she knew the valour of discretion and knew how to handle reluctant victims like Spike.

He found Sam in his kitchen cooking dinner. He seemed to have his hands full so, not wanting to disturb him, Greg went upstairs where Ed was keeping Spike company.

“Sam’s making dinner.” He said by way of a greeting. “Though god only knows what he’s found to cook in my kitchen. How are you holding up, Spike?”

“I’m not as sore as yesterday.” He replied, sitting up a little straighter in the bed. “I don’t really know about the rest.” He chewed his lip and played with the edge of the blanket before speaking again.

“What did Alexei say?”

And that was a loaded question. Spike’s feeling for Alec hadn’t gone away overnight, nor had his own battered self-esteem magically reinfated.

“He admitted to hurting you.” Greg replied, keeping it simple. “Laid it out very plainly with little
ambiguity. I can’t promise it will be enough, but we’re in a stronger position today than we were yesterday.”

Spike nodded, looking a little brighter. “I appreciate you talking to him, getting it all on tape. I know it can’t have been easy.”

He sat down and reached for Spike’s hand, taking in his and intertwining their fingers.

“No, it wasn’t easy. But it was the least I could do for you Spike. And I’d do it again if I had to.”

The smile Spike gave him eased the pain in his heart just a fraction and he smiled in return.
They all stayed in Greg’s that night, concerned that Alec might return to Sam’s place and feeling there was better safety in numbers until things progressed. Greg put Spike in the bedroom next to his. Spike had insisted he didn’t need someone in the room with him and that they all looked exhausted and could do with some sleep. It was hard to argue with him there. But still, Greg woke during the night to check on their teammate.

It was about three am when he found Spike’s door open and the room empty. A quiet sound across the hall led him to the bathroom, the door not quite closed. Greg was going to knock when he heard the retching, instead pushing the door open to find Spike on his knees next to the toilet, the diffuse glow of the light above the bathroom mirror the only illumination in the room.

The retching stopped and Spike sank to the floor taking gulped breaths.

“Spike?” The younger man jumped at the sound of his voice, pulling in on himself as he turned to look at Greg with wide eyes. “Sorry buddy, didn’t mean to startle you. You’ve been sick?”

There was a short sharp nod in answer to his question, then Spike was leaning back over the toilet bowl, throwing up what little was left in his stomach.

Greg grabbed a face cloth, wetting it with hot water from the tap. He crouched next to Spike, reaching a hand out to offer comfort. Spike tensed beneath his hand. “Shh, it’s okay Spike. It’s just me. I’m right here, not going anywhere.”

The bout of retching ended and Spike sank back towards the floor with a sigh. “Here.” Greg caught Spike’s chin with his hand and used the damp cloth to gently clean Spike’s face. His skin was flushed and warm to the touch, sweat visible on his face.

“Hold on while I get you some water to rinse your mouth out, okay?” Spike nodded, seeming confused but Greg wasn’t sure why.

He hurried down to the kitchen, grabbing a glass and filling it with cold water.

Returning to the bathroom he found Spike in the midst of another bout of quiet retching. He left the glass next to the sink, reaching for a hand towel and dampening it. He returned to crouch next to Spike, rolling the wet cloth and placing it gently on Spike’s neck. Again Spike jumped at the contact.

“Hey, easy. It’s just to help cool you down.”

Spike sighed and pulled away to sit on the floor. “It’s okay, you don’t need to… I can take care of myself.”

“I know you can. But you’re sick and you’re hurt and you shouldn’t have to. Here.” He handed Spike the glass of water. “Rinse your mouth out.” Spike did, spitting the water into the toilet bowl then reaching a hand out and flushing before letting himself sink to the floor again.

He looked drained, cheeks unnaturally flushed but the skin beneath them pale. He was sweating and sticky, hair stuck to his forehead. Greg cleaned his face again, Spike closing his eyes under Greg’s touch.

“You’re a bit warm. I think you might need something to take your temperature down.”

“Sure, as long as we’re not talking ice bath.” Spike’s voice was weak, but the humour was there.
“We’ll save the ice bath for later. How about some tylenol? Do you think your stomach is done for now or do you want to wait a bit longer?”

“I think a few more minutes, to be on the safe side.”

“You should have come and got one of us.” Greg added after a moment and Spike was suddenly avoiding his eyes.

“Come on Spike, talk to me, please.”

Spike sighed and spoke to the floor.

“Alec hated when I got sick. I guess I got used to hiding it.”

“You were sick a lot?”

“I was so on edge around him, my stomach was always playing up. And sometimes he’d get pissed off when I didn’t eat and…”

“And what Spike?” He asked, coaxing gently.

“He’d force feed me. Forkful after forkful until I threw up. Then he’d act angry and disgusted, like he was only trying to help and it was all my fault.”

He was blushing now, the tips of his ears going pink from embarrassment.

“Well that explains why you’ve been losing weight this past while. We’ll have to work on that.”

“Don’t worry, Ma will handle it.” Greg could well imagine she would. “I guarantee you she’ll be by tomorrow with a weeks worth of food.” Spike added wryly

Something seemed to occur to him then, a sad look flickering over his face.

“What is it Spike?”

Spike shrugged but seemed to think better of it and broke his silence. “I can’t go back to the basement.” There was such resigned finality to his tone that Greg felt his response needed more than words. He sighed, reached out and pulled Spike to him. “It’s okay, we’ll work it out. You don’t have to go anywhere you don’t want to go.”

“I can’t hide in your house forever.” Spike’s reply was muffled, his head buried in Greg’s shirt.

“Sure you can. We’ll bring you food, get your clothes, your games console, your books and you’ll be all set.” Greg spoke in jest but Spike relaxed a little at his words.

“Hey, you don’t need to hide, but right now, while you’re healing up, you need to be somewhere you feel safe and somewhere Alec can’t get to you.” He rubbed a hand gently along Spike’s arm when he shuddered at Greg’s words.

“Come on, let’s get you up and back to bed.” Greg helped him to his feet and supported him as they walked back to his room.

“Your top’s damp. I’ll get you one of my shirts to sleep in. Hold on.”

He was gone and back in two minutes. Spike pulled off his shirt and let Greg pull the clean one on over his head.
It took a few more minutes to get Spike settled, get some tylenol inside him and get him back to bed. Greg pulled up a chair next to the bed and sat stroking his hand and watching as he lost the battle with sleep.

Spike woke a little later and frowned at him. “You need sleep too, Boss. Go to bed.”

“I’m fine right here.” Greg was adamant, and if he was honest with himself, it was as much about not leaving Spike alone with his demons as it was him not being alone with his.

Spike grumbled something under his breath, then tugged the blankets down and rolled over to the far side of the bed, facing away from Greg. “Then get in. There’s lots of space.”

“Spike I…”

“Shhh, ’m sleepin’” came the mumbled reply from the bomb tech followed by some exaggerated snores.

Greg spent a long few minutes staring at the bed. It took a shiver from Spike to prompt him into action, climbing in beside the younger man and pulling the blankets up over them both to keep them warm.

He lay on his back, keeping a careful distance from Spike, who seemed to be sleeping peacefully. He slept too, eventually, waking only once, when Spike cried out. Greg had reached a hand over to Spike’s back before catching himself, realising that contacting one of the welts on Spike’s skin would probably guarantee an abrupt awakening. Instead, he let his hand caress Spike head while he murmured reassurances. Spike settled beside him and he drifted back to sleep.

***

Spike felt the bed dip when Greg finally climbed in beside him and forced himself to relax and sleep. When he woke again it was with the vague recollection of a nightmare. Morning light was streaming through the windows and a quiet snore beside him indicated the boss was still asleep. He moved to sit, biting back a pained moan at the stiffness in his body.

As if on cue, the door opened silently and Ed peered in. He seemed unphased at the scene he was presented with, walking around to Spike’s side of the bed. He spoke softly.

“Hey buddy. You’re overdue some painkillers. I checked on you earlier but you were still asleep.” He held out a glass of water and two tablets. Spike dutifully swallowed them down.

“Thanks, Ed.” He whispered back, casting a glance at Greg as he spoke.

“You two were up in the night?”

Spike shrugged then winced as the pain from that small movement alone was more than he’d expected. “My stomach was sick. The boss insisted on staying with me but he really needed some sleep so I made sure he got it.” He wasn’t sure why he felt so defensive and he knew his tone wasn’t what it should be. Knew Ed would normally pull him up on it. He ducked his head, half expecting a reprimand but knowing it wouldn’t be forthcoming.

Instead, Ed sat on the edge of the bed and put a hand on Spike’s shoulder. “Hey, you need what you need at the moment. We’re all here for you. And you’re right, Greg needed the rest almost as much as you did.”

He couldn’t look up. He just felt so helpless, so weak, so… scared. He was an SRU officer for
crying out loud. He was supposed to rescue people, not need rescuing. Supposed to protect people, not need or want protection. But right then and there, right in that moment, he wanted to be protected, held, reassured.

“Hey…” Ed let the words hang in the silence between them. Spike guessed what he was trying to do. Read him, read the situation, choose the right words. He was betting Ed was wishing Greg was awake. Because Greg always knew the right thing to say while Ed was more of an action kind of person.

So it shouldn’t have come of as much a surprise as it did when Ed squeezed his shoulder gently and murmured. “Scoot over, will you.” Spike moved on autopilot, shifting towards Greg. Then Ed climbed in beside him, sitting next to him, his back against the headboard and stretching his legs out in front of him on top of the duvet.

It was a bit of a squeeze with the three of them, Spike pressed between Greg’s sleeping form and Ed’s relaxed body. He was tense for the first few minutes, trying to work out how to deal with this shift. It wasn’t much really, the difference between two people and three people in the bed, but it takes a while for his body to catch up with his brain and recognise that Ed wasn’t a threat. It helped when Ed reached down and laced the fingers of his hand with Spike’s.

When he finally relaxed, he sank back a little against the headboard, wincing as it contacted his abraded skin. He looked up to see Ed watching him closely. ”Here, lean against me. You need to keep the pressure off your back.” He let go of Spike’s hand to give him space to shift, moving his arm carefully around Spike’s shoulders. It took another few minutes for Spike to adjust to the closeness, surprised to find it wasn’t accompanied by the churning in his stomach that usually accompanied close proximity to Alec.

***

When Greg woke the next time, there was a body pressed against him and the quiet murmur of voices beside him.

“Yeah, but you see, entry A had the better vantage point. Entry B, while it had better access to the building as a whole, had a blind corner to navigate before you got to the main corridor. All it would take is one guy standing there and…”

Greg opened his eyes and turned his head to see Spike propped up against the headboard. Ed sat next to him and the two were quietly discussing tactical entries. Spike had moved over to give Ed room and his side and thigh were pressed against Greg. He seemed comfortable with the closeness of the two men. Trusting.

Spike made some comment to Ed that Greg didn’t quite catch. “Exactly. See, that’s what I’m talking about…”

Greg sat up, making his awakening known.

“Morning sleepyhead.” Ed greeted. “Sam’s making coffee.”

“Morning Ed, Spike. How the stomach?”

Spike turned a little red at the question but answered nonetheless. “It’s okay. I’d have woken you if I was sick again.”

“I know you would have buddy. I’m glad you didn’t need to, for your sake. You badly needed the sleep.”
Ed didn’t ask questions but Greg knew he’d be filling him in later. Spike was drip feeding them bits and pieces from his time with Alec, slowly bringing light to the dark world he’d been living in since Lou’s death. It was hard to believe it had only been a matter of months.
Writing has been quite a struggle for me these past few weeks but the good news is this story is finished. Chapters 11, 12 and a long epilogue. There's a little bit of editing to be done on the last two but they'll be up tomorrow and the day after.

Sam’s arrival was a welcome distraction from the things Spike didn’t want to think about. He arrived carrying a tray with a plate of toast, eggs, bacon and coffee.

“Breakfast anyone? There’s more downstairs.” Ed got to his feet, hand clasping Sam’s shoulder as he walked past. “Samtastic, you are a lifesaver.”

Greg was smiling too. “I think we’ll keep you.” But it was Spike’s reaction Sam seemed to be seeking.

“Hungry?” Sam asked. Spike nodded as the smell of the food wafted towards him.

“Good. I don’t make eggs for just anybody you know.” He teased, and Spike couldn’t keep the grin from his face.

Sam put the tray down on the dresser, then handed a cup of coffee to Greg and one to Spike before sitting the tray in the centre of the bed and sitting himself down next to it. “Breakfast in bed okay for everyone?”

The door pushed open as Ed returned, a second tray in his hands.

“Breakfast in bed is just what we need.” He answered, setting the second tray down and taking a seat.

The next half hour was filled with munching, slurping coffee and idle conversation. Sam was watching Spike intently and Spike found himself watching him right back. All three were carefully coaxing Spike to eat, but Greg saw to it that it was never more than gentle persuasion. When they’d finished eating, Sam went to gather the dishes together.

“No Sam, you stay here, keep Spike company. Ed and I will handle the dishes.” Greg said, getting up.

Ed preceded him from the room and Greg closed the door behind them.

Sam, sitting cross-legged on the bed, smiled at Spike. “So how are you feeling?”

Spike ignored the automatic okay that came to his lips and answered honestly. “Sore and stupid.”

“You need some more painkillers?”

He shook his head. “Ed gave me some earlier.”

Sam paused, seeming to hesitate before asking the next question. “You want a textbook or
At Spike’s bewildered look he added. “To combat the feelings of stupidity.”

Spike opened his mouth to reply then closed it, words failing him.

“Sorry, that was a piss poor excuse for a joke but I thought it might be better than meaningless platitudes. You know you’re not stupid. You’re the smartest guy I know.”

He moved as he spoke, sitting next to Spike, their bodies touching.

Spike tensed at first then relaxed against him, letting his head rest on Sam’s shoulder.

“Oh, so you just like me for my brains. A zombie soldier, huh?”

“Yep, if I was a zombie, you’d be my first victim.”

“Yeah, well if you’re not a zombie then I don’t know what you see in me.” He’d meant it as a joke, but it didn’t come out right.

He tried to sit up but Sam moved first, his hand caressing Spike’s face where it rested against his shoulder.

“The same thing I’ve always seen in you Spike. From the moment I met you.”

Spike turned his head towards Sam and just let his lips brush the other man’s cheek, then moved to kiss Sam on the lips. Testing the waters.

Sam froze, hand pulling away and Spike realised his mistake. He tried to sit up, move away, movements panicked and desperate. As he jerked back, his hand caught the glass of water on the bedside locker, sending it crashing to the floor as Sam’s hands returned, catching hold of him.

“Hey, hey. Slow down. It’s okay, Spike. It’s okay.” Sam moved to press Spike to his chest, hands soothing gently along his back.

His heart gradually slowed back down, matching the reassuring thump of Sam’s heartbeat against his ear. He heard the distant sound of footsteps followed by the door opening but was distracted by Sam’s quiet words in his ear.

“Spike, you’ve been through a lot. You need time, time to heal up, to grieve, to come to terms with what you’ve been through. And then, maybe, we can look to the future. There’s no rush. These things take time and patience.”

Spike pulled away from Sam reluctantly, looking him square in the eyes before meeting Ed and Greg’s concerned gazes where they stood by the door.

“Can’t we just skip it? I’m done being scared and hurt and I want you, all three of you.” His eyes were dripping tears, his nose running, he knew he looked like crap and not like someone anyone would want to jump into bed with. He ducked his head and waited, silently, for the rejection.

***

Sam knew he wasn’t the best person to handle this situation. He’d tried to keep to the periphery somewhat, let Greg and Ed handle Spike in his fragile state, but he guessed they’d figured that out and weren’t going to let him get away with it, pushing them back together again. And now he’d made a mess of things.
Spike cut a pitiful figure sitting on the bed, tears dripping from his face, head down. Sam looked helplessly over at Ed and Greg. How was he supposed to handle this? After all he’d been through, Spike couldn’t possibly want what he was asking for from them, could he?

Greg and Ed moved to sit on the bed beside them, careful to avoid the broken glass. Both of them seemed uncertain how to proceed, which didn’t help Sam’s already struggling confidence.

He thought an outright no would only fuel Spike’s downward spiral. But he couldn’t give Spike what he was asking for, not right then, not in the middle of this situation.

He reached for Spike’s hand, which was clasped tightly to his knee, and gently pried it loose. Spike curled it into a fist automatically and Sam, encircling Spike’s hand with both of his, uncurled it a little, bringing the hand to his mouth and kissing it gently.

Greg had pulled a tissue from his pocket, and he leaned over, taking Spike’s chin in his hand and tipping his head up. He cleaned Spike’s face, wiping his eyes and nose, then pressed a kiss to Spike’s cheek, close to his ear before whispering something to him.

Ed moved last, sitting behind Spike and pulling him to lie back against his chest, placing a kiss on his shoulder. Sam moved to help buffer Spike, Greg doing them same. Sam didn’t let go of Spike’s hand and Greg gently pulled Spike’s other hand from his knee and held it too.

“Just rest a minute, Spike. We’ve got you.” Ed whispered in his ear.

Greg tried a different tack, finding a way to impress on Spike what they were struggling to find the words to express, only not in the way Greg had planned or Sam had expected.

“Spike, do you remember our night together? Remember what it felt like?”

Spike nodded, eyes drifting closed.

“So imagine we tried to do that again, right now, exactly as we are. Can you see how that would play out?”

Sam could. Spike hurting, panicking under their touch, scared and crying and…

He found he was shaking at the mental imagery, tears falling unbidden from his face.

He buried his head in Spike’s neck, hearing a bewildered “Sam?” from Spike as he felt the tears Sam couldn’t hide. He pulled away just enough to speak.

“I’m sorry Spike, I can’t do it. I don’t ever want to hurt you. It would break me. When we do this again, I want it to be right, for all of us. I’m sorry.”

There were hands rubbing circles on his back, voices murmuring. He could make out Ed’s voice, talking to Spike.

“… you mean so much to us. Seeing you hurt is like being hurt, we care that much. Asking for time isn’t a rejection or a punishment. It’s a promise, from us, to you, when you’re ready.”

When he got himself under control Sam looked up to find Spike peering back at him, eyes red. “I’m sorry, Sam.”

“You have nothing to be sorry for. I just can’t stand the thought of you hurt and us being the cause.”

Spike was shaking his head, over and over.
“You’ve never hurt me, you wouldn’t ever hurt me. I know that. I didn’t mean to push, I was just…”

“Doing a security check, seeing how strong the barriers were.” Ed supplied. “Don’t worry Spike, we’ll hold.
Greg insisted Spike have another day of bed rest. “Do you want me to call Carolyn and ask her opinion?” He’d said when Spike had protested. “She’ll be by this evening anyway.”

Spike groaned and laid back on the bed, throwing his hand over his eyes with dramatic flair. “You’re worse than my Ma.”

“An insult of the highest order or a compliment, what do you think Sam?” Ed asked. Sam had been quiet since his reaction to Spike’s request, and it wasn’t going unnoticed by any of them.

“A bit of both I guess.” He replied but there was no trace of humour in his voice.

Ed restrained a sigh deciding instead to tackle the problem head on. “Sam, you want to give me a hand downstairs?”

Sam looked confused, presumably trying to figure out what was downstairs that needed to be done but he agreed, following Ed out of the room.

Ed walked into the living room, Sam trailing him. He turned to face the younger man. “You want to tell me what’s going on in that head of yours?”

“What are we doing? How can we promise him anything? How… how…” He looked at Ed helplessly.

“Grab the keys, will you? I’ll let the guys know we’re heading out for a bit.”

Sam looked confused. “Where are we going?”

“We’re hitting the gym. I think we could do with a workout. There’s a punching bag with your name on it.”

It seemed like Sam was going to argue but he forced a deep breath into his lungs and simply nodded.

***

He drove each punch with more and more force, feeling satisfaction as each blow found its target. He could imagine it was Alec. Alec’s head, his abdomen. He kept going, past the point he’d usually stop, while his muscles protested. He didn’t stop until Ed physically pulled him away.

“Enough Sam, that’s enough.”

“It’ll never be enough.” He bit out, trying to push past Ed to get to the bag.

“Yeah, how’s it going to look to Spike when you come back with bruised and bloody hands?”

“At least it’ll look like I’m doing something.”

“That’s not what he needs right now buddy. He doesn’t need you to go seek out Alec and wreak revenge on him. He needs you there, by his side, supporting him.”

Sam gave in, letting Ed pull him away and push him to sit down on the bench. Ed took a seat next to him and they sat in companionable silence for a while before Ed clapped him on the shoulder and declared it time to go.
The phone call from Detective Havers was welcome. They’d taken Alexei in for questioning that afternoon and taken a DNA sample though Alec was asserting all relations with Spike were consensual. They had let Alec go home and he was going to return, with his lawyer, for further questioning the next morning.

“We haven’t brought in the tape or the evidence from Spike’s room.” She added. “We’ll see how he responds under some pressure.”

Greg was torn between wanting to protect Spike and wanting to keep him informed. He found Spike sitting on the edge of the bed, staring at nothing. He filled him in on the contents of the phone call.

As he spoke, his phone rang again, and he answered it. “Hello?”

The voice on the end was quiet. “Hello Sergeant Parker. It’s Alexei Ryod. I’d like to speak to Mike. I assume you’re with him.”

“That’s not going to happen I’m afraid…” Greg started to say.

“Ask him. Ask Mike. Give him the choice whether to speak to me or not.”

Greg muted the speaker and turned to Spike, who had sat up, looking anxious.

“Is it him?”

“Yeah Spike, it’s Alexei. He’s asking to talk to you.”

Spike looked at the phone like at any moment it might explode and he hadn’t a clue how to disarm it. He reached out a hand to take it before jerking it backwards.

“I want to talk to him, but I don’t want to talk to him. You know what I mean?”

Greg nodded and held out the phone, giving Spike the choice. He reached out again slowly and held the phone in his hand. “Mike?” Alec’s voice came through the speaker. “Mike, talk to me, please.” Spike looked up at Greg then back at the phone, before pressing a button, ending the call.

“I feel sick.” He said as Greg took the phone back from him. And he looked it. Pale and sweating.

The phone rang again, same number. Greg cut the call off. It rang a third time and he stood, stepping out of the room and into the hall, closing the door behind him.

“Alec.” “I want to speak to Mike. Now. This is all just a misunderstanding.”

“Mike doesn’t want to talk to you, Alexei. Don’t call this number again.” And he hung up.

He stepped back into the bedroom and the phone rang again.

“Do you want to block the number?” Spike asked. “The phone company will still have a record of calls received, but they won’t get through.”

“Let’s do that.” Greg replied, not relishing the idea of having to screen his calls for the next few weeks.

“He might just change numbers though.” Spike added.
“If he does, we’ll deal with it.” Greg reassured.

“I’m afraid, if I talk to him, I’ll forget about what he’s done. He’s been my lifeline these past few weeks. The only good thing left. Or I thought he was anyway.” Spike seemed embarrassed by the admission, cheeks flushing red.

“He’s a manipulative narcissist. He knew you were vulnerable and he took full advantage.” Greg said, struggling to keep the anger from his voice. “He knew exactly what he was doing Spike, don’t forget that.”

“What did he tell you?” Spike’s voice was small and he played with the blanket beneath his hands.

“That he hurt you. That he knew you didn’t want it but he did it anyway.” Greg was careful what he told Spike but knew saying nothing wouldn’t be enough to settle the bomb tech’s curiosity.

“I’m sorry about before… what I asked you for. It wasn’t fair, to put that kind of pressure on you after everything you’re doing for me.”

“You don’t need to apologise Spike. Just keep talking to us, that’s the important thing.”

Spike let go of the blanket before speaking again. “There are some things that I think it would be better if I talked about with someone else. I know you, Ed and Sam are there for me and would listen to anything I had to say but…”

Greg got was Spike was trying to tell him. “You want to talk to someone neutral. Someone who doesn’t have the emotional investment. Someone who’s trained in how to talk about these things.”

Spike seemed relieved that Greg understood. “You know, I think I might know someone. I’ll make a call, set up an appointment.”

“Not the SRU psychologist?”

“No, you’ll have to see them before you return to work but I think the whole healing process needs someone with a different approach. You’ll like her, I’m sure.”

He could see Spike considering his words before he nodded. “Thanks, Boss.”

“No problem, Spike. Now, how exactly do we block this number?”

“You’d better hand the phone to me Boss, we both know technology is not your forte.”

“Yeah, yeah. It’s a miracle I can work the light switches.” Greg griped good-naturedly.

***

They had a quiet night. Sam stayed with Spike until long after he fell asleep before he eventually got up to leave. He got as far as the hallway when he heard a noise and returned to find Spike in the beginnings of a nightmare.

Unable to watch Spike struggle with his dreams, he woke him up with a gentle shake of his shoulder. Spike was disorientated but he had roused enough to figure out what was going on, giving Sam grief for being by his bedside in the middle of the night.

He’d presented him with the same ultimatum he’d given Greg. “Go to bed or get in.”

Sam stared at him with wide eyes before bidding Spike goodnight and heading for the door. His
hand had just gripped the door handle when Spike let out a pained sigh. Realising he’d get no sleep if he left Spike alone, he turned back, approaching the bed and climbing in next to him. Spike didn’t react and seemed to be feigning sleep, breathing evened out. Sam let his eyes close too.

When they opened, it was to the sound of a quiet cry. “Spike?” he whispered, his voice sounding loud in the silent room.

He reached out a hand to Spike’s shoulder, clasping it gently, noticing how Spike flinched beneath his hand.

“It’s okay Spike, it’s just me.” Spike didn’t reply, but another cry made its way past his lips, his shoulders shaking beneath Sam’s hand.

“Spike…” Sam tried again and Spike moved, turning over so they were face to face.

His face was wet with tears, his hand across his mouth trying to muffle the sound of his sobs.

“Aw, Spike. Come here.” He held his arms out and drew Spike into his embrace, bringing the bomb tech's head to rest against his chest. “Shhh, you’re safe, I’ve got you. You’re okay.”

He continued to murmur reassurances as Spike clung to him, tears wetting the fabric of his shirt. Spike mumbled something and Sam had to lean his head down to hear. “It gets easier, right? The nightmares? You must have had them, after…” Spike trailed off.

“You mean after Matt? Yeah, I had a lot of nightmares. Still have them sometimes but less often and less vivid as time goes on. And not just Matt, there are things that stay with you, things you see or do and things that happen to you.”

Sam was aware he was rambling a bit but just the sound of his voice seemed to have a calming effect on Spike so he kept talking until the younger man fell asleep.

Their Sunday morning started late, Sam and Spike woken by Greg. He didn’t ask how it was they’d ended up tangled together under the blankets, accepting Sam’s brief explanation that Spike had had a nightmare. Spike looked a little sheepish and muttered something about being like a toddler.

They all came downstairs and sat at the table for brunch. Ed had gone out earlier in the morning and got some food. After they ate, Spike made a call to his parents, reassuring them he was recovering well. It was clearly a difficult conversation, his mother asking some questions Spike struggled to answer as far as they could tell from the rushed Italian he was speaking, his free hand adding to the conversation.

After lunch, Detective Havers called. Greg stepped upstairs to take the call. He’d been surprised Havers had been pursuing the investigation so aggressively given it was the weekend but, as she admitted to him herself, her caseload had been quiet and she didn’t like to let cases like this lie for too long.

He listened as she spoke, thanked her, then returned downstairs. The other three were in the living room, Spike lying on one couch, covered with a blanket, Sam and Ed on the other couch. There was a game playing in the background but it didn’t seem to be holding anyone’s attention.

“Spike, I have some news from Detective Havers. Do you want some privacy while I fill you in?”

Spike sat up but shook his head. “No, that’s okay.”
“Alexei attended the station today with his lawyer. They confronted him with all the evidence and played the tape of his conversation with me. Evidently he was unaware of how much he’d said and how clearly he’d said it. He had a meeting with his solicitor following it and they met with the prosecutor taking responsibility for the case. The bottom line is that Alexei has agreed to accept a plea deal. He’ll plead guilty to a number of charges in exchange for a lesser sentence.”

“What charges?” Ed said as Sam asked “How long?”

“Aggravated sexual assault, false imprisonment, assault. He’s going to plead guilty to some sample charges in exchange for dropping the false imprisonment charge. He’ll serve a minimum of eight years and be put on the register. It won’t go in front of a judge except for the sentencing and neither you or he will be named.”

Greg took a seat next to Spike as he finished speaking, giving the young man a minute to digest what was being said.

“He just admitted it?” Spike looked confused.

“He was overconfident. He never anticipated you’d report it so he made no effort to hide what he’d done. Forensics went through your basement with a fine tooth comb, he knows his DNA will be a match to whatever is found. Plus they found his belt with your blood on it. And he made the mistake of admitting what he’d done to me. The false imprisonment charge was the one they had the weakest evidence for so they conceded on it to avoid a trial.”

“No trial? No newspapers? Nothing about the four of us?” For the first time since everything had come out into the open, there was hope in Spike’s eyes.

“No.” Greg shook his head. “Alexei might try and spread those rumours around but all that will do is draw attention to him and what he’s done. He won’t want that.”

“So what now?” Sam asked.

“From our side of things, not much. It’s in the hands of the justice system, we just let that run its course. From the practical side of things, we need to go back on shift tomorrow. Spike, I’m not too happy with you here alone all day. I thought maybe we could speak to Wordy and Shelley and you might stay with Shelley during the day and stay here at night. We’ll just take things day by day for now. Until we know what the situation is.”

Spike was nodding, looking thoughtful. “What will we tell Wordy and the rest of the team?”

Greg and Ed looked at one another before answering. “I spoke to them yesterday Spike, told them you’d been injured but you were okay. They’re worried, of course, but we don’t have to tell them any more than you’re comfortable with.”


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Spike spent the next week alternating days at Wordy’s house and nights with Greg, Ed and Sam. His second day with Shelley he missed a dose of painkillers, took them on an empty stomach and wound up on the floor of her bathroom throwing up. When she’d tried to help him change out of the vomit splattered top he was wearing, he’d resisted at first, insisting through chattering teeth that he could manage. She’d been gently persistent and he’d found himself letting her help. She saw the cuts and the bruises but she didn’t ask.
She got him back to bed and they sat in silence for a while before she told him a story about a girl who fell head over heels for a guy who turned out to be a violent abusive bastard. Though Wordy didn’t talk about it openly, Spike had some idea of Shelley’s past. He listened as she talked, identifying with her complicated feelings for her ex. He found himself talking to her, telling her about Alec.

It was the first of many talks they’d have over the next week, as Spike tried to process all that had happened. He started counselling midway through the week, with the psychologist Greg had arranged for him to see. The first few appointments were hard, Spike struggling just to get words out, but it got easier.

By the time three weeks had passed, most of his physical injuries were healed. Carolyn declared him fit for some exercise and Spike found himself taken out for a run by Sam and Ed.

A few days later, Ed sat him down and discussed the plan for retraining. “We’ll start small and work up to it.” He’d reassured on seeing the uncertainty on Spike’s face.

Sam and Ed had alternated staying nights in Greg’s house while they waited for Alexei to be sentenced and jailed. Spike always went to bed alone but his nightmares meant he usually woke with company. When he couldn’t sleep, one of them would sit up with him, Ed talking tactics or weapons, Greg reminiscing on the calls they’d aced, subtly and not so subtly trying to boost Spike’s self-esteem. Sam would talk about the past, stories from his time in the military.

As Spike recovered, both physically and mentally, the tone of the conversations changed subtly. Greg started talking about current calls and training plans, and a security conference he thought Spike should go to. Ed followed up some of their late night firearms conversations with some real-life target practice on the range. And Sam started talking about plans for the future, place he wanted to show Spike, people he wanted him to meet.

Physically, apart from comfort when he needed it, they kept their distance and the desperation Spike had felt in his early days of recovery ebbed away. They weren’t going to walk away, weren’t going to abandon him. They were in this for the long haul.
Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

*Four months later*

“So I was thinking pizza and a movie?” Sam announced as he flopped down on the bench next to Ed in the locker room.

“What?” Ed asked, looking bewildered.

“For our first date with Spike.” He replied in an undertone, a little exasperated, as he took a furtive look around to ensure they were alone.

“Oh, that’s this week, isn’t it?” Ed replied nonchalantly. Sam frowned, about to give Ed a piece of him mind until he realised the man was yanking his chain. He settled for rolling his eyes.

“I know, tomorrow night. I’ve had it marked in my calendar since we decided on it.” Ed replied with a grin. “Pizza and a movie sounds perfect.”

Greg joined them, taking a seat next to Sam. “All set for tomorrow?”

Ed groaned, letting his head drop but Sam ignored him, nodding enthusiastically. Spike chose that moment to wander in, looking distracted. He’d spent all day setting up a new protocol on Babycakes software, working out the many kinks that came with it.

On catching sight of all three men sitting side by side on the bench, he smiled, moving to stand in front of them and leaning back against the lockers. He moved with re-found confidence. He’d requalified over a month before to the delight of Team One and had gone from strength to strength since. Only the other week, he’d beat his previous best on the physical training course.

“I hear the new Pixar movie is supposed to be amazing.” He bounced on his heels as he spoke.

“Nuh-uh.” Ed protested. “Animated movies are for kids. Action movies are for SRU officers.”

“Isn’t there a Bond movie out? I figure that’s right up our street.” Greg suggested.

Spike’s face fell. “Alright. But I really wanted to see the other one.”

“You could take Wordy’s kids?” Ed suggested. “I’m sure they’d be happy to accompany a lone adult to a kids film. And would stick out a lot less that four grown men going together.”

Spike conceded with a grin. “Well, when you put it like that…”

And so it began, again.

***

Three dates later and Spike was beyond frustrated. Each had gone fantastically. They’d all had a great time. But each had ended the same way. As Greg drove them home, he spoke up. “Please tell me we’re going to do more than kiss tonight. I’m not sure I can take any more of this go slow thing you’ve got going on.”
All three men exchanged a look before Greg spoke up.

“If you’re sure Spike…”

“I’m beyond sure.” He said, letting his frustration show.

“Okay, I guess… my place?” Greg suggested. All three nodded agreeably. The journey to Greg’s house took ten minutes. The journey from Greg’s hall to his bedroom took fifteen minutes as they kissed, shed clothes and otherwise got distracted. Finally Ed picked Spike up bodily and deposited him in the centre of Greg’s bed. He glanced up at his three soon-to-be lovers with a pleased smile before letting himself fall back onto the bed. This would be a night to remember. The first of many, he hoped.

***

It wasn’t all plain sailing, as Ed would muse months later. Spike had a lot of difficult memories from his time with Alec and it could be hard to know what might trigger one. Ed made the mistake of kissing him while he was doing the dishes one evening, hands resting on Spike’s shoulders. He’d felt the second Spike had frozen beneath his hands and had managed to get him, trembling and tearful, away from the sink and over to the couch where he’d held him until it had passed and Spike stopped shaking in his arms. Spike gave a very brief, halting, explanation of what had happened.

“I… maybe we could make a new memory?” Spike suggested, peering over his couch at the sink in trepidation.

“What did you have in mind?” Ed asked.

“Um, so maybe I’ll go back to doing the dishes and you try kissing me again and maybe… let me take the lead?”

It sounded, to Ed, like the last thing he wanted to do, but for Spike’s sake he agreed to go along with it.

Spike was still unsettled, hands gripping the edge of the sink until his knuckles turned white, but this time, when Ed kissed the back of his neck and rested hands on Spike’s shoulders, Spike turned so he was face to face with Ed. His hands were shaking as he reached for Ed’s face, bringing their lips together. The first kiss seemed to spur something desperate within Spike and he kissed Ed again, deeper this time, hands fisting Ed’s collar before his fingers splayed out across Ed’s chest.

Ed took slow steps, crowding Spike against the sink, pressing warm kisses along his jaw and neck, letting his fingers run across every patch of bare skin he could find.

“Do you want to take this to the bedroom?” He said in Spike’s ear, voice low.

“The dishes…” Spike half turned towards them but Ed gently turned him back around. “They’ll keep.”

Spike smiled, letting Ed take his hand and lead him towards the bedroom. Crisis averted.

***

Greg, especially in the early days of their relationship, had watched carefully for any negative patterns of behaviour lingering after Alec. He’d found what he was looking for nearly six weeks later, after a difficult call where Spike had been foiled at every turn by a fiendishly elaborate customised security system. They’d eventually just had to use brute force, and the occasional
explosive, to bypass it. Greg knew they had a problem when Spike had apologised during the
debrief. All of them had chimed in in support and defence of Spike. They knew it wasn’t a failure on
his part but the bomb tech was especially sensitive so newly returned to the job.

They went home to Greg’s house, all four of them. It was only when Spike flinched away from Sam
when the younger man had tried to pull him in for a hug, that it clicked in Greg’s mind. Alexei had
convinced Spike, aided by Spike’s own insecurities, that the things he’d done to Spike were
deserved punishments for mistakes. And now he thought he’d made a mistake and some part of him,
even just subconsciously, was anticipating the consequences. Consequences that were both
undeserved and not forthcoming.

“Spike.” Greg spoke calmly, ignoring the worried looks on Ed and Sam’s faces. He waited until their
bomb tech turned to look at him. “You did your best today, under very difficult circumstances. And
when you realised the problem was beyond the limits of your abilities, you told us. That’s not
making a mistake, that’s doing your job. I’m proud of you.”

He stepped towards Spike slowly before drawing him into his arms, hugging him fiercely. He pulled
back and nudged him towards Ed.

“You did good, Spike. We’re a team, right?” Spike nodded, letting Ed draw him into an embrace.

Sam didn’t wait for his turn, wrapping his arms around Spike from behind and murmuring something
into Spike’s ear. Greg didn’t know what was said, but Spike blushed, smiled and buried his head into
Ed’s shirt. Greg heaved a sigh of relief and moved to join them.

***

A year after Lou’s death and the world was the same but different. So much had changed and yet it
felt to Spike like some things never would. His relationship with Sam, Ed and Greg went from
strength to strength despite the necessary secrecy that came with such an unusual arrangement. He
didn’t mind though. He had what he wanted, what he needed.

Alexei was sentenced to ten years in prison. By the time he got out, even with early parole, he’d be a
distant memory in Spike’s mind, memories he was determined would be overshadowed a hundred
times by new experiences.

They got a call for a suspicious package at a family planning clinic. Spike sent Babycakes in, got a
read on the situation, then went in to take care of the all too real bomb.

Once he got a good look at it, he broke the bad news to the others. “It’s the same guy who hit the
clinic in Ottawa last month. Intricate device, lots of traps to catch you out when you try to disarm it.
How are you coming with the evacuation?”

This guy was smart. He’d set off smaller bombs at the exits to the building and set off the security
systems, trapping everyone inside. They’d cleared an exit and were moving people out, but it was
slow.

“Guys, there’s a timer. Seven minutes.” He added, as he pealed back the covering to reveal the
intricacies of the bomb.

“We need at least double that to evacuate everyone.” Greg replied. “Can you disarm it?”

“Not in seven minutes. But I might be able to detach the timer, buy us some time. It’s not identical to
the last bomb though, he’s made some changes.”
“Do what you can Spike. Go carefully, okay?”

“Always, Boss.”

He focused on his task, separating the timer from the main explosive device. It was easier than he’d imagined. Too easy, maybe. He was down to three minutes on the timer when he called in again.

“How’s the evacuation going, guys?”

Ed’s voice replied. “We have a second evacuation point, should have everyone out in five.”

“I’ve managed to isolate the timer but I haven’t disconnected it yet.” They read trouble in his voice.

“What’s the problem, Spike?”

“It was too easy. There’s a chance it might trigger the bomb to explode so I need to wait until the last second to give you as much time as possible to evacuate.”

“What about defusing the bomb itself?” Ed asked again

“That would need a lot more time than we have.” He answered shortly, knowing they already knew that.

“Get out of there, Spike.” Ed ordered.

“How many people still to evacuate?” He responded.

“Thirty. We’re getting about eight out a minute.”

“I’ll detach the timer at the last second. If it works, it’ll give you time to evacuate the rest. Priority of life, remember?”

He watched as the seconds ticked away. “Spike…” Greg started to talk but, unusually, words seemed to fail him. Spike knew what he was trying to say.

“I know, Boss, I hear you. Guys, these last few months… I just wanted to say thanks, for helping put me back together.” 30 seconds

“Do not give up Spike.” Sam’s voice. Trusting, unwavering.

“Never, Sam.” He choked out. “Never.” 20 seconds.

“Spike, buddy, don’t take chances. Do what you have to and get out of there.” Uncompromising. Unaccepting.

“Will do Ed.” 10 seconds.

“Disconnecting the timer.” He said, as he cut the wire, closing his eyes. The timer stopped counting down but the bomb started beeping. He opened his eyes and heaved out a breath he didn’t know he’d been holding.

The bomb maker was gifted. He was also merciful. A second timer lit up on the bomb itself. Four minutes and counting. Enough time for him to get out of range.

“Guys, the bomber has a soft spot for bomb techs. It bought us time but not much. Three minutes fifty and counting. How long til everyone's clear?”
“We’ll be done in ninety seconds Spike, get out of there now.” Ed replied, sounding pissed.

Spike didn’t need to be told twice.

He got to a safe distance and took shelter with some uniforms behind a patrol car while the bomb exploded, sending up a cloud of dust and debris into the air and bringing down the south facing half of the building.

“Guys, everyone okay?” He heard Greg call.

“No harm.” Ed’s voice came through the din, coughing. Followed by Jules, Sam, Wordy and Leah.

“Spike?” Oh, right. “I’m fine, I’m out. Meet you at the truck.”

When he got there, Greg was directing the clean up effort. He opened the door and gestured Spike in. He followed him in a minute later, switching off his headset and turning Spike’s off as he pulled it from his head.

Spike found himself pulled into an embrace, warm hands on his back and head. “Safe and sound, Boss.” He murmured.

“That was a close one.” Greg replied as he pulled back. He picked up the headsets, returning his to its rightful place and switching it on. “Let’s get back out there.”

Both Ed and Sam managed to restrain themselves to a pat on the shoulder. Sam looked jealous when Jules didn’t hold back, enveloping Spike in a warm hug. “Don’t do that again.”

“Hey, it’s my job.” He protested.

That night, by silent agreement, they decamped to Greg’s house. He was two steps into the living room when Sam wrapped arms around him, pulling him to rest against his chest. Another warm body pressed in behind him. Ed.

“That was great work today.” Greg said, from somewhere to his left.

“The bomb went off. I’m not sure we call that a win when you’re aiming to defuse it.” Spike joked.

“We got everyone out safely. No loss of life. That’s what we call a win. The building they can rebuild, the people, not so much.” Ed said, crowding close to Spike.

"I know guys, really." Spike replied, knowing they'd read the truth in his voice, in his body. Where months previously there would have been a lingering worry in his mind that he'd made a mistake, there wasn't a shadow of a doubt that today he'd done all he could, made the right calls, however difficult. He'd done his job.

“Let’s get you to bed.” Greg said, as Spike’s eyes closed of their own accord. His warm hand took Spike’s, gently pulling him from the other men’s embrace.

“Sex then sleep.” Spike insisted as he let Greg lead him to the stairs. “Spike, you’re tired…”

“Not too tired. Not that tired.” He put the slightest wiggle in his hips as he walked, hearing a choked laugh from Sam behind him and a muffled curse from Ed causing Greg to turn back in consternation. Spike gave him his best innocent smile.

He’d showered at the station with the rest of them, needing to get rid of the grit and dust they were all coated with. The three men undressed him reverently, before Sam directed him to the bed with a
gentle push. Spike lay on his side, feeling warm bodies slide in beside him. Hands reached for him, caressed him and he reached out in turn, feeling the warm beat of his lover’s hearts beneath his palms. It was enough. More than enough. It was home.

The End

Chapter End Notes

A big thank you to those of you who managed to make it this far, especially those who left kudos and comments. In particular, SoupShue, hope_06, siennavie and Penguin201.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!