Taming of the Shrew: 'Sentinel'ized

by Bumkin

Summary

A modern retelling of the classic Play of William Shakespeare using the Sentinel characters and with a minor twist.

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by Bumkpin

Author's website: http://bumpkin-is.livejournal.com/
Not mine.
I want to thank 'karieflybabe' for helping me talk my way through this (into both an outline and then keeping me writing once I started), giggling at the very concept and adding in some ideas for a few scenes, dialog and other sundry notions.

This story is a sequel to:

Taming of the Shrew - 'Sentinel'ized
by Marns AKA Bumpkin
Rated: PG

x-X-x

"No, no and no! How many times have I told you Steven - Jimmy is the heir and as soon as the boy gets done playing soldier, cops and robbers, and whatever else he comes up with to skin out of doing his duty along those lines, he is going to inherit everything!"
Steven Ellison ground his teeth in frustration. His father continued to rant.

"And as I said before, I do not intend to attend the fundraising Gala at Rainier without both of my son's at my side. With or without escorts! So unless you can talk your brother into joining us, I shall be going alone!"

Steven opened his mouth, ready to hotly dispute that his being required to make Jim do anything was far above and beyond the call of familial duty, but his father overrode him before he could get a word out.

"I don't need the social nightmare Steven. I really don't need the headaches from the conclusions those vultures would jump to."

Finally able to get a word in edgewise, Steven just growled out, "Fine!" And then he stormed out, thinking William Ellison was the last person to talk about not needing to be given a headache. He certainly had a knack for doling out the things.

x-X-x

Still fuming, Steven made his way to Rainier and the girl who was the latest object of his affections, Lucinda Padua. Sitting together on the lush front lawns she cuddled him and made all the right noises in all the right places as he recounted his argument with his father, then after she had figured a suitable amount of time had passed she offered up a suggestion.

"Why don't we just make sure your growly bear of a brother attends? We could bribe someone to ask him. In fact..." She trailed off, a speculative gleam in her eye.

Steven sat up from the enclosure of her arms. "What? Lucy, c'mon now - spill. You have something in mind - I know that gleam."

Lucy turned and looked at her wealthy lover, "Well I was just thinking about this one junior Professor they have here on staff in the Anthro Department. He's not only gorgeous, but the man has a silver tongue. If anyone could talk someone into going somewhere they didn't want to go it would be him. I swear at times he could charm and sweet-talk birds right out of their trees, well if he thought it needed done anyway."

Steven's face made a little moue of distaste. He said acerbically, "I liked the sound of everything you said right up until you added that last bit darling, because that last bit makes it sound like he's an ethical man. And an ethical man isn't going to be too open to a bribe now is he? Which doesn't help us a whole hell of a lot."

"Dammit, you're right." Lucy sagged. Then she perked up again, a wicked look on her face. She drawled out maliciously, "Bu-u-ut, there's someone who is bribe-able, who does have leverage over the good Professor - Chancellor Edwards! You could tell her what you want her to do in return for a 'donation'." She sat back again, mouth curved in a little grin, obviously pleased with herself.

Steven couldn't help himself, he smiled back. She was just so damned gorgeous. Smart too. It was a good idea getting Chancellor Edwards to do the dirty work for them. Plus, his brother would be less likely to catch on to the scheme if the man used as their pawn was truly honorable. Jim always did have a knack for spotting the scumbags of the world, Steven had never figured out how he did it.

"I guess I'm going to be making an appointment to see our esteemed Chancellor then." Steven said, "Wish me luck for our endeavor's success?"
"You know it."

x-X-x

"So let me get this straight," Catherine Edwards, Chancellor for Rainier University asked the urbane young man sitting across from her. "You are prepared to make a rather sizable 'Donation' of your father's money and in your father's name, but this is only if I can successfully coerce Professor Blair Sandburg into sweet-talking your brother into going to the fundraiser Gala your father is hosting in a month? Do I have that right?"

"Yes." Steven replied simply.

"Then I think, Mr. Ellison, we have an understanding." Chancellor Edwards said as she smiled a nasty little smile. Young Professor Sandburg was quite a thorn in her side, he never wanted to play ball when it came to the athletes in his classes. Or on any other number of occasions when he should really look the other way. This was a tailor made opportunity for her to either get him out, or just make him toe the line.

x-X-x

"You want me to what?" Blair stared at the woman in his office like she was speaking a foreign language, one of the ones he didn't understand.

"I think you heard and understood me clearly enough Professor - unless you can succeed in getting Detective Ellison to the fundraising Gala his father is hosting in a month, you are out of a job. It's time the Prodigal Child gave back to this Institution that has given you so much...you're not the whiz kid you were when you started here anymore Blair. I would think, at least, you'd be scrambling to assure yourself a little job security here - it's not like you have tenure." Chancellor Edwards stated coldly.

"I can't believe you... I can't even begin to..." Blair ruthlessly raked his fingers through his hair, undoing the neat way he'd had it tied back in his agitation. Lacing his fingers together while they were still buried in his mass of hair, he pulled his arms forward squeezing his own head between his forearms and allowing himself a small hoarse cry as he did. It was the closest he was going to be able to get to screaming and crushing something at the moment - two things he really, really, wanted to do. That and pace, but what he had been laughingly given as an 'Office' didn't allow for that either.

Chancellor Edwards' voice rang through the converted closet, "Professor Sandburg, you will do this or your employment will be terminated... with extreme prejudice. I'm not even going to pretend that you haven't taken in every single word I have said," she paused for a beat, then added meaningfully, "and understood the ones I haven't."

Blair's hands fell from his hair and his shoulders sagged as he slumped like the strings holding him upright had been cut.

"Yes, you do understand don't you?" The Chancellor's smile was positively wintry. "All the means at your disposal, no matter what they are. Because Blair, if you fail - don't bother coming back."

Blair threw himself into his chair as she swept out of his little corner of Academia with the ultimatum still ringing in his ears.

"Damn," he whispered to himself, "what am I supposed to do now?"

x-X-x
Blair stood in the hallway just outside of the bullpen doors as he watched the detectives of Cascade's Major Crime Department interact with each other. For the most part, they looked like pretty standard cops - a rather convivial bunch even. They weren't chained to their desks like automatons with great invisible seas of no-man's land throwing up barriers between them. Rather they were moving around, wandering to each other's desks to share case notes and joking around with each other in passing. A friendly and warm atmosphere seemed to breathe from their work area - all except for one corner to the left, off by the windows. There it was cold and prickly, somewhat standoffish or possibly just irritable. Whatever is was; the area - and the Detective inside it - was given a wide berth by all the others in the bullpen. Blair understood why when one had to approach while he watched.

"Hey Jim, you done with those files on the Masterson case yet babe?" And even though it looked like he had been expecting it, or something like it anyway, the tall genial black man his co-workers had called 'H' still jumped when 'Jim' growled at him while spreading his hand over the open file he had on his desk. H didn't react otherwise however except to say, "Ah guess not, lemme know when I can have them okay?"

Then he turned around smartly and walked back out of the 'Chill Zone'. Blair had to laugh when he noticed that even with the speed the Detective was using to get back to his own territory, H still found the wherewithal to roll his eyes exaggeratedly where the grumpy Detective Jim wouldn't see. The muffled laughter from the remainder of the room must have clued him in though because he looked up at them and sneered.

"Damn, and I thought women had the corner on catty behavior. Me-freaking-ow." Blair muttered under his breath. Then he held his breath in shock and amazement when the man named Jim looked away from his colleagues with narrowed eyes, searched around for a bit and then finally settled lightly frowning in his direction, peering into the shadows of the hallway where Blair stood. "Oh man," Blair breathed, "could he really be...?" Before he could speculate any further though, a bellow sounded from the right.

"Ellison! My Office!"

Blair jumped at the roar, but then paid attention. He wanted to know who answered the preemptory summons seeing as Ellison was the name of the detective the Chancellor said he had to get to the fundraising Gala. He had extremely mixed feelings when he saw the person who got up was Detective 'Jim', the grump. On one hand the guy showed signs of seeming to have some enhanced senses, something Blair was always on the lookout for, but on the other hand he was, well... a cold and growly grump. Not exactly the type of person Blair ever went out of his way to aggravate, or befriend - it generally wasn't worth it. But he guessed he had a reason to this time, two possibly. It would all depend on if Jim Ellison did in fact have the enhanced senses Blair thought he might.

Blair sighed. Why couldn't his life have stayed nice and simple? It had been going along gratifyingly until now, really it had. He had started his university career early and now he had two PhD's under his belt, one in cultural anthropology - using his secondary thesis idea - and the other in biological anthropology. Not too shabby for a man who had barely broken the quarter century mark in age; and that wasn't even counting the various degrees he had in the other fields he'd dabbled in during his academic career. Ruefully he admitted to himself that as much as he'd hated being Rainier's touted 'Whiz kid', he'd certainly managed to live up to the moniker in spite of his feelings on the subject. He supposed he couldn't bitch too much though, it was in part what had allowed him to gain the Junior Professorship a year ago. The very position that was in jeopardy now unless he could figure out a way to get into the good graces of one Jim Ellison.

Now, that left him with only one thought - how in the nine circles of hell was he going to be able
to swing this? He needed to meet and befriend someone who looked more than a bit antisocial. They couldn't give him an easy task could they?

x-X-x

Blair sat nervously in the big Police Captain's office. The Captain, Simon Banks, was the man behind the stentorian bellow Blair had heard when he was lurking in the hallway a few days before. He was everything his voice promised too, large and commanding being the two most obvious. He also didn't look impressed. Blair could empathize.

He'd wanted to make sure his meeting with Jim Ellison was couched in legitimacy, so after scoping things out he'd put in his application to work part time for the police as a civilian consultant. Part time, the position didn't pay much, and most of what he would earn would be on a case by case basis. But that wasn't the reason he'd applied. He thought that he might be able to conveniently run into the man in the course of their duties and strike up a conversation - hell, maybe even help him with one of his cases. But this he hadn't expected.

It seems that when his application went in the Commissioner was present, and of course with the man being an accomplished politician, he'd recognized Blair's name as being the same as Rainier's 'Wunderkid' now made good. The Commissioner had then handed down his decree that Blair should be partnered with the partner-less 'Cop of the Year'. It was going to be great PR for him - too bad he wasn't the one who had to tell the perpetually grouchy man that he was getting saddled with a partner, one that was a long-haired hippy punk of a civilian to boot.

So yeah, Blair was nervous. For some reason he had a pretty good idea that Jim being told he was going to have to cope with Blair as a partner wasn't going to go over well. Might have been the 'vibes' he was getting off the Captain. The man wasn't happy and was making no bones about showing it. Shredding his cigar with gnashing teeth will convey lots of information if you could read between the lines.

And Blair was pretty much a consummate professional when it came to reading between lines. He'd had a lot of practice at it during the course of his school years, both behind and in front of the podium. Suddenly Captain Banks hollered, making Blair jump in his seat.

"Ellison, my office!"

From where he was seated, Blair couldn't see the man who'd been so summarily... summoned. But as soon as the large frame appeared in the doorway he knew this wasn't a good time. Not that there ever would be a good time, but today seemed to be worse than usual.

The tall, irritated man standing, or rather looming, in the doorway of the Captain's office was already asking gruffly, "Yeah Captain, you wanted to see me?"

Exasperation was evident in his tone, and his eyes warily flickered around in a lightning quick circuit of the room until they came ultimately back to rest on Blair. The eyes locked on him clearly were wondering what he was doing there. He didn't belong so why was he there? Blair tried to swallow the boulder that had taken up residence in his throat.

He'd expected the contrary part of the man's nature; he hadn't expected the man's lethality. As Captain Banks explained just what he was doing there, the tall Detective walked further into the room to give himself somewhere to pace. Between the lousy attitude, and the deadly grace the man was displaying Blair could admit to himself that he just might be in over his head. If he was smart he'd be intimidated, but Blair had never been one to back down from anyone, and he wasn't about to start now.
"... a little unorthodox, but I'm sure the two of you will work things out." Simon finished.

"What? Captain, I have a full caseload and nowhere in it is there time for babysitting duty over the resident egghead who's decided he wants a few cheap thrills!" Jim burst out.

Blair reddened at the babysitting crack, yeah he looked young but that didn't mean he was. The egghead part didn't bother him but when the good detective added the bit about looking for cheap thrills, Blair got mad.

He bit out, "You know - when I signed on for this gig it was under the impression I would be able to help all the departments solve some of the cases they have been having trouble with and for your information, the last place I wanted to be was on the streets. Hardly makes me the cheap thrillseeker you were talking about, does it? Furthermore, I didn't ask to be partnered with anyone, let alone the 'Cop of the Year' who obviously has too swelled a head to accept the help he is offered gracefully. If you had listened to you Captain Detective, then you might have heard how he was told by those higher up to partner us - it's not his fault and not mine, so why don't you get off your high horse and deal like the rest of us have had to already."

Jim stood stunned. He didn't look like he knew how to reply. His Captain did instead as he said into the following silence, "He's right Jim, our hands are tied. Neither of you asked for this but you're going to have to make the best of it like I said. Now get out of here I have work to do."

He sat down at his desk as Blair got up and walked briskly out of the office after giving the big man a sharp nod. Jim followed the smaller man still looking a bit dazed. Simon watched them go and sighed. He muttered to himself, "They have all the earmarks of either being a partnership to write about, or being a partnership that's doomed to failure - I'm just going to have to wait this one out and see which way things go."

x-X-x

It didn't take long for Jim and Blair to clear the air between them. Especially since Blair made it a point to be available to all the detectives in the station if they needed his help for any case. It was pretty amazing how many were solved with his new way of looking at the facts actually. Plus Jim found that whatever else he was, Doctor Blair Sandburg was a great anthropologist and so working with him was almost like working with a ghost. Blair knew how to fade into the woodwork no matter where they were, even with his unconventional way of dressing.

Also an apology went a long way when needed. That and a steady invite to the other seat of his season tickets to the Jags. Turned out the good Doctor was almost a more rabid fan than he was, who'd a thunk it?

Jim was just starting to get into the swing of things with Blair as his partner when something else cropped up to get in the way. His senses started to really act up again like they had when he had gotten stranded in Peru. He tried to hide it, things were going so well otherwise and he didn't want anything to muck up the rhythm he and Blair had attained both in their working relationship and the all too fragile new friendship between them. But again, Blair turned out to be too smart for him and figured it out.

Turned out Blair had done one of his thesis's on enhanced senses and knew ways for Jim to manage them. Jim had never felt so easy in his own skin before. It was a godsend, well it would be if he believed in god. Then Sandburg started to harp at Jim, how he had to tell Simon about the senses. How it was too dangerous for Jim to go out alone and that he needed someone to watch his back when Blair wasn't at the station. Finally it got to be too much and they had a hell of a fight. Jim accused Blair of being too in tune with his feminine side and acting like a worried hen and Blair accusing Jim of being so macho that he'd lost all sense in the flood of testosterone. By
the end of it they were both seeing red and stormed out in opposite directions.

Almost a week had passed before they even thought about resolving anything, and that was mainly at the prompting of the other officers who liked working with the more relaxed version of Ellison.

x-X-x

Blair was standing and talking to the former bomb squad Captain, Joel Taggart, about his latest case when Simon glided up behind him soundlessly. Blair of course didn't notice him, at least not until the Captain of Major Crimes rumbled out,

"So, you over your snit yet Doc? Whatever it was about,"

Blair leaped nearly three feet in the air, "Eeeps!" His acrobatic display and little scream cutting the larger man off in mid-sentence. Simon blinked. Joel chuckled. Blair glared.

Putting a hand to his chest Blair asked, "What snit might you be referring to Simon?"

"The one that had you storming out after you and Ellison were screaming at each other in the breakroom like an old married couple."

"Oh."

"Yeah, 'Oh' indeed. Now I had Ellison in a couple of days ago..." Simon looked like he was trying to find a diplomatic way to put what Jim had said, then just shook his head. "Ah hell, I was hoping I could count on you to be the reasonable half of the partnership."

Blair smiled wryly, "You know, reasonable isn't really in my character description Simon - but for you I'll do my best."

Simon, and everyone else within earshot, heaved a sigh of relief at the young man's answer. Simon quickly told Blair where he could find the other man and sent him on his way before he could change his mind.

x-X-x

Blair walked into the bastion of machismo otherwise known as a shooting range and looked around. He spotted Jim at about the same time as Jim saw him. 'Hmm, Jim with his gun out and firing - I am soo glad we are surrounded by his fellow cops, this could have gotten real messy real fast.'

Blair wandered closer, asking himself as he did if he was crazy, but still moved forward. He watched with a wince as Jim's jaw throbbed and his knuckles whitened. Then the staccato sound of Jim squeezing off round after round sounded. All head shots of course.

Blair could easily hear what Ellison was muttering as he shot too, not that the older man was making a point of being quiet.


Blair leaned back against the wall and crossed one foot over the other. Sighing he crossed his arms across his chest as well and settled in to wait for Jim to ease his temper. He had more time than
Jim had bullets at any rate.

He wasn't waiting for long, as he predicted Jim had run out of bullets before too much time had passed. Pushing off the wall, Blair asked, "So, done?"

Jim gave him a flat look, but nodded as he holstered his weapon. Blair asked, "Can we go somewhere where I'm not so likely to get perforated and talk then?" Jim's lips quirked, like he was trying to fight a smile. Blair didn't call him on it, but tentatively smiled at him instead. It broke the ice. Jim started to guffaw.

He said grinning, "You really don't like it in here do you?"

Blair shot him a look from under a comically high raised eyebrow, "Ummm what gave it away? The clatter of my boots as my feet shake in them, or perhaps you can see my hair's valiant battle against gravity as it tries to stand on end?"

Jim just laughed again as he slung an arm over Blair's shoulders and pulled him close with a quick jerking motion. He said, "You know sometimes Sandburg, you are way too predictable." He reached up with his free hand and noogied the rich brown curls clamped against his chest as they walked. Blair's hands flew up to protect his head as he cried,

"Ah man, not the hair!"

x-X-x

And so things were again back on track. Jim and Blair, having forgiven each other, were again a team. People the station over, were grateful and breathing sighs of relief at the renewed presence of the anthropologist as he soothed the beast named Ellison. Captain Simon Banks was let in on the secret, Blair finally having worn Jim down on the matter. Simon had no idea what to make of his lead detective's new skills, but he set some protective guidelines down just in case according to Blair's instructions.

Weeks passed and people were beginning to find it hard to remember when Sandburg hadn't been around. Others closer to the two began to notice other signals being passed between the two, signals they seemed oblivious to. It was all going so well.

Then, crunch time came. The Gala was only a few days away. Blair had been having so much fun with Jim and was finding his work with the rest of police so rewarding, that he'd almost entirely forgotten about why he'd applied for the job in the first place.

It still wasn't for the money; even with all the cases he'd helped solve what he earned was a joke. Blair sadly looked around, he had a bad feeling he might not be welcome here too much longer. It was time to pay the piper... Blair just wished it didn't feel so much like he was earning his thirty pieces of silver.

x-X-x

Jim looked up as his unofficial - yet officially assigned - partner approached his desk. He smiled and said, "Hey, what's up Sandburg?"

Blair smiled back, if a bit nervously. "Listen man, I know you hate the fancy crap as you call it, but as a Prof at Rainer I gotta go to that huge fundraising Gala that's coming up in a couple days," he began. He paused for a moment and then rushed on, "well I was wondering if you would maybe go with me? Y'know keep me company around all the pompous idiots that always flock to events like that, what do ya say?" The ingratiating smile he wore as he finished asking would have
done any used car salesman proud.

Jim looked at him stoically for a moment, but then as the smarmy smile began to get strained he answered with a grin of his own, "Sure Chief, I'll go and brave the wilds of High Society with you. Protect you from all the grand dames that are going to want to pet that mane of yours and coo over your cheeks."

Blair snorted and muttered, "Pet me and coo over my cheeks is right, I'm just not sure that you understand it's not the cheeks of my face I am worried about. Last time I went to one of these I was cussing out my lack of armor-plated underwear."

Jim let out a belly laugh that drew every eye in the room, and Blair swatted at him for it. But he was grinning too.

x-X-x

Blair walked into the front doors of the building that had been set aside to host the huge party and winced. "Man, it's going to take me forever to find Jim in this mess." He muttered to himself and started to search for his friend.

He hadn't been looking long when his arm was grabbed by Chancellor Edwards, and she steered him to one of the many outside patios where they might have a little quiet and privacy.

"I told you," she hissed at him, "That if you didn't bring the 'good detective' with you then you needn't have bothered showing up."

"He'll be here!" Blair stated defensively and then after he shook his arm loose from her grasp and took a few steps back, he continued. "Listen, Jim and I really get along, I don't want to hide anything from him. I want to tell him about the donation being made in his name if he shows up."

"No! You can't! The Cascade Ellison's are one of this University's largest contributors, we can't afford to alienate them. What do you think would happen if your 'Jim' gets upset after you tell him and he goes off ranting to his Daddy? This one donation promised under the condition you get the man to attend is worth an incredible amount, you tell the Detective how he was conned into coming and what do you think will happen to the donation then? It'll be withdrawn, that's what - and it's too much money at stake to put on the line for your precious 'honesty'." The Chancellor was livid. Her eyes narrowed as she spat, "And besides, say you tell him and when he finds out that you purposely befriended him for mercenary purposes - what do you think he would think of you then?"

A voice growled out of the shadows, "Most would call that betrayal, and I don't think I'm any different on that score." Jim stepped onto the patio from the hallway and leveled the most scornful look Blair had ever been subjected to in his life and said to him, "I thought you were my friend, guess I was wrong. Don't come back to the station, it's obvious you took the job under false pretenses and I don't ever want to see you again." Blair shivered in the ice of those words.

Colder still Jim added, "I think perhaps my father and I need to have a little talk, if you will excuse me." And then he left. Leaving a fuming Chancellor and crushed Junior Professor in his wake.

x-X-x

Jim arrived at the fundraising Gala shortly after Blair did, he could still scent the younger man's presence in the main entrance. Jim impishly decided to track Blair down by following his scent trail. Making sure to keep another sense engaged so he wouldn't zone like his friend had taught him, Jim began to move silently through the gathered humanity present.
He was about to crow and pounce out of the shadows when he finally located Blair on one of the
many patios where he was being intently talked to by an older woman. Jim briefly noted Blair
didn't look happy but then he tuned into what they were saying. Or more accurately, what the
woman was saying.

"...The Cascade Ellison's are one of this University's largest contributors, we can't afford to
alienate them. What do you think would happen if your 'Jim' gets upset after you tell him and he
goes off ranting to his Daddy? This one donation promised under the condition you get the man to
attend is worth an incredible amount..."

Blood rushed from his head in shock and he paled as what the woman was saying hit him. Blair
had only been his friend for the sake of money? He'd spent four weeks integrating himself into the
police station for the sake of a donation? Did the younger man respect or like him at all? He'd
missed a bit of what the older lady said but tuned in again in time to hear her scathingly say,

"...And besides, say you tell him and when he finds out that you purposely befriended him for
mercenary purposes - what do you think he would think of you then?"

Guess that answered the question whether or not he actually liked him or the other guys at the
station, Jim thought grimly. Not bothering to move out of the concealing shadows until he could
control his face, Jim grated in a voice barely under his control at first.

"Most would call that betrayal, and I don't think I'm any different on that score." As he stepped
into the open of the patio, he eyed Blair with disgust and said angrily, "I thought you were my
friend, guess I was wrong. Don't come back to the station, it's obvious you took the job under
false pretenses and I don't ever want to see you again." Not bothering to see how his words
affected the man who he'd called friend Jim added, "I think perhaps my father and I need to have a
little talk, if you will excuse me."

Then, not being able to take the pain anymore, he left to find his father. Jim could hear the general
direction of where his father was and moved towards it. But since he was keeping his gaze trained
on the floor to avoid meeting anyone's eyes, his father saw him first and hailed him.

"Jimmy! You made it!" Then as soon as Jim was close enough to speak normally he said warmly,
"It's good to see you son. I have to admit though, I wasn't expecting you to show."

Jim pulled his father to the side of the room to go out onto another of those patios the building
seemed to have a ton of as he said in a voice pitched only for his father's ears. "Cut the crap Dad, I
overheard your mercenary duo chatting and I know you paid them to get me to come tonight. I
just want to know why - why have someone get closer to me than even Caro did, for the sake of
me being at this shindig?"

"Jimmy I honestly have no clue about what you are talking about - if someone arranged to have
you here it wasn't me. I've always said you choices are your own. Besides, you know where I
stand about what you are doing with your life, I've never hidden how I feel about that so why
would I bother to arrange something like what you are talking about?" William said looking
confused, and Jim knew he wasn't being lied to because as soon as he'd started talking to his father
he'd had his senses trained on him. The same senses he wouldn't have this level of control over if
it hadn't been for Blair, he thought with a pang. Could he have been wrong? Heard something out
of context? Wanting his father's input, he filled the other man in on all that had been going on for
the last month and then finally what he had overheard and said in return.

x-X-x

William Ellison was furious. He'd easily recognized the Chancellor of the University from his
son's description, and he knew the woman was a shark. The other person who'd done the actual befriending wasn't as easy to place, but he finally did recognize the University's 'Whiz Kid' and was a bit puzzled - he'd heard the young man was so honest he gave Chancellor Edwards hives. William couldn't think of a reason the young man would have been in on the scam, it just wasn't in character for him.

"Jimmy," William said slowly. "I believe you heard what you said you heard, but some things just aren't adding up. I think we need to find the Chancellor and this Blair and ask them some questions - what do you think?"

His son looked at him, eyes bleak enough to make William's heart clench in his chest. Then he asked, "Do you really think it'll help Dad? If Blair does turn out to be innocent, I don't think he'll want anything to do with me after the way I blasted him without giving him a chance to explain earlier."

William's answer was as pragmatic as they come, "Well we won't know unless we try so let's go."

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Peering around the large potted plant he was using for a hiding place Steven Ellison resisted the urge he felt to scream and pull at his immaculately coiffed hair. "Damn it!" he whispered, then thought, "Everything had been going so well. Jim had actually looked happy when he'd arrived... what could have gone so wrong?" He knew something had gone drastically wrong because his father and Jim had closeted themselves for a short while, and then when they reappeared - looking less than happy - they were acting in concert. Looking for someone it seemed.

Steven had a sinking suspicion about who they might be looking for, and if it wasn't him, then he was sure it was the Junior Professor he'd had the Chancellor put the screws to, Blair Sandburg. If that was the case, then it certainly behooved him to find the little bastard first since the only reason his father and brother would be looking for the guy would be because he'd somehow managed to spill the beans. And seeing as Steven had no idea how much this Blair character knew of his involvement, it might be prudent for him to find out. So slinking around the edges of the large rooms and through the back hallways, Steven began a search of his own.

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Unfortunately for him, Steven's little audible cussing slip up had been enough for his brother to notice. Then when looking for the younger man, Jim had made note of his unusual behavior and mentioned it to their father. Together the older Ellison's decided they needed to see just what their youngest family member was up to and followed him.

When Steven found Blair in one of the less populated hallways, Jim braced himself expecting to hear... oh hell - he didn't know what he expected to hear, just that it wouldn't be good. What he did hear had him nearly falling over in shock though as Steven immediately started to accuse Blair.

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Blair was wandering around the back hallways, sticking to the less populated areas because he'd never felt less like talking in his life when suddenly a well-to-do blond man was in his face.

"You! All you had to do was make nice and get Jim to come to the Gala with you, but you did something and now Jim and my Dad aren't happy. Whatever happened to make everything go wrong is all your fault! You hear me, this is all your fault!"
Blair had only been able to stand there stunned by the mini-tirade being heaped on him by a complete stranger. Then Chancellor Edwards swooped in from somewhere, Blair reeling couldn't have said from where and added her own vitriol, "He's right, this is all your fault. You had to rock the boat, you just had to try and push that you knew better didn't you? Now you see where that got you? Cast out. Not only from the University as you didn't hold up to what you were told to do, but out of that nifty new boys club you had joined downtown. Nobody wants you around anymore. You didn't give back even a measure of what you had been given you ungrateful little peon. And since you never learned how to play the game or even toe the line, I don't think your loss of a job is even going blip on anyone's radar. As for me, with the money you have just lost us - I say good riddance to bad rubbish!"

Blair was nearly blown away by the sheer acrimony in the Chancellor's words but what she'd said first, echoing who he guessed was Jim's brother Steven, stuck in his mind.

Not about to back down now when he hadn't ever before in his life he snapped, "My fault? Excuse me? Nooo, I don't think so." He coolly appraised both people standing in front of him. "I think this is all your fault. This is what your overweening hubris got the two of you - I wanted no part of this but if you recall, I was given no choice in the matter. Now oddly enough, your scheming allowed me to meet and get to know a man I would have been much poorer for not knowing, which in a strange way makes me want to thank the two of you. Unfortunately in the longer run, it might also have lost me any chance of a lasting friendship with him as well, which in turn makes me want to hate the two of you."

He turned to face the Chancellor more, "and as for you saying that I never played the game or toed the line - did you ever think that might have been on purpose? That I wanted to be 'what you see is what you get'? I gave the school everything I had, I was the best teacher I could be and you still say I don't live up to the standards the University wants, but in reality I say the University doesn't hold up to mine. In fact, now that I'm thinking of it - don't bother firing me, because I quit!"

His piece said, Blair turned and strode away, not realizing the two men he brushed past as he left were Jim and his father. His eyes had been too full of tears, and as he was nearsighted the combination made him damn close to blind.

From their vantage point, Jim and William exchanged long looks with each other. The level of the young man's upset hadn't been missed by either of them. They weren't stupid, just not so fast on the uptake sometimes. Understanding now that Blair had been the unwilling pawn of both Steven's and the Chancellor's plays for power, they wordlessly agreed that this would have to be dealt with sooner rather than later. And what better time than right now?

As one they advanced on the two still in the hallway. There was some much needed damage control to be done and there was a great deal to repair as well. The two who'd been the cause of so much misery weren't going to know what hit them.

x-X-x

Blair was in his office, packing it up slowly. Painfully. He'd gotten a note from Jim that he still had his job at the station, but at the moment wasn't sure what it meant. He supposed it could have been Jim's lame way of apologizing for not giving him a chance to defend himself, thing was he wasn't sure he was ready to forgive Jim yet. Then there was a light knock on the open door frame.

"Chief, you here?"

"What do you want?" Jim flinched imperceptibly, Blair's voice was flat and dry, a far cry from his usual vibrant tones.
"Umm, well for one to tell you this isn't necessary - my dad and I straightened everything out."

"Oh?" The wealth of inflection Blair packed in that on syllable made Jim cringe visibly this time. Doggedly he continued though,

"Yeah, while chatting with the Chancellor it was decided that the best thing probably was for her to resign, as soon as possible. Retroactively to before the Gala started actually, so your job is safe."

Blair sighed and finally stopped his slow motion packing. Then said quietly, with more than a little bitterness, "What if I don't want to work in a school where a low level professor could be put in a position of near prostitution to save his job? Hell, if it's not Chancellor Edwards, it would be someone else."

Jim's mouth tightened at the defeat he heard in Blair's voice. He had been so concerned about being betrayed by Blair and then being relieved that he hadn't been, he really hadn't given too much thought to what the whole ordeal had been like from Blair's perspective. That had been, perhaps, a bit short sighted of him. Especially with what he wanted to ask the other man...

"Well, I guess that's something that you're going to have to decide on yourself - but I hope that it's not going to be something you'll have to worry about again." Jim finally ventured. Nothing ventured, nothing gained had to be a cliché for a reason didn't it?

"Why would that be Jim?" Blair asked. He still sounded almost deadened. Jim found it very unnerving but kept on anyway,

"Cause I was kinda hoping that you would move in with me?"

Blair blinked. You could almost tangibly see the vitality rushing back into him. Jim actually did, in his own way, as he monitored the minute physical reactions of the younger man. Blair's heart-rate sped up, his respiration became a little shaky, and a barely perceptible tremor ran over his whole body intermittently.

Jim waited what seemed like forever for Blair to say something, then he did.

"Like a roommate thing?" Blair's voice was hesitant and Jim felt the beginnings of disappointment, but still managed to reply lightly,

"If that's all you were comfortable with - but I was actually hoping for more."

Blair stared, his mouth open for a beat, but then a wide smile curved it's way across his face. Jim started to smile back and Blair launched himself into the larger man's arms. Standing toe to toe, chin to nose, and arms wrapped securely around each other, Blair huskily answered Jim.

"More could definitely be workable."

End.
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