

Jamie settled back in the recliner with his KZ soda and unmuted the TV for the third quarter of the Peach Bowl. He'd had other plans during half time—and hopefully the rest of the game, but his boyfriend was busy. There was another thunk and curse from the kitchen. He kicked the volume up another notch and drank his soda. Didn't sound like Gavin was going to be less busy any time soon. Guess Jamie's dick wasn't getting sucked before they had to leave for Quinn's. The flatscreen was almost the size of Jamie's mattress at his place and the recliner so good to sink into, it might as well have been a furniture porn star. Hell, it was big enough for two in plenty of interesting combinations. Jamie wasn't ready to start an interior design business, but the big plush recliner didn't exactly go with the sleek furniture in the rest of the place. The suspicion that the recliner and big TV had been added with Jamie's company in mind filled him with equal parts affection and caution. He hadn't asked for it. Or for the drawer in the bedroom that remained conspicuously empty and often ajar. And he certainly hadn't asked for advice from a nosy club rat who pointed out that maintaining two addresses was a total waste, especially if they were spending part of almost every night in the same bed.

But even though Gavin never said anything about it, Jamie couldn't see the guy giving up views of the harbor and twenty-four hour security for his Bentley and the fully tiled rain and steam shower for Jamie's little two bedroom in Dudalk, and Jamie probably couldn't afford even the maintenance fees on this place. He was nobody's kept boy.

Annabelle huffed out a sigh from her bed between the couch and recliner. Yeah. A nap would probably be good. He had third watch. Peak drunk asshole hour on Amateur Night. As he slitted his eyes all hell broke loose in the kitchen.

“Fuck! Fuckfuckfuckfuck.”

Annabelle jumped up, looked at Jamie as if she expected him to do something about that and then ran off to the bedroom.

Gavin had enough of an impressive vocabulary that Jamie had gotten himself a word of the day calendar to throw into his desk at work. If Gavin was going to be reduced one word, Jamie wanted it to be because of him. His dick up Gavin's ass. Or Gavin's up his.

He kicked down the foot rest and went out into the kitchen. Nothing was on fire and Gavin wasn't bleeding. So far so good.

"Everything okay?" He put his soda on the counter.

"What do you think?" Gavin pointed at a baking sheet where a pile of...well, pastry turds flopped and oozed.

"And those are?"

"They're supposed to be the start of Lobster Newburg. Well, Crab Newburg."

"The start." Jamie calculated.

Gavin had been in the kitchen since ten AM. It was three now and they were supposed to be at Quinn's by five, given that Eli had made it an early New Year's Eve party since Jamie had to leave for work by nine thirty.

"I know. You were right. I should have just picked up cheese and crackers."

Gavin could handle making more than just reservations to feed himself, but Jamie guessed pot luck wasn't something regularly experienced up in the black-tie Montgomery world. Jamie had shrugged and said they could pick something up, but Gavin had been determined to make something to bring.

Jamie poked one of the pastry turds. "What do you do with those?"

"You hollow them out and put the crab in a kind of cream and sherry sauce in them."

That teased out a memory. Cheese balls and cigarette smoke thick in the house. “Like some kind of stew served in a bread bowl?”

“I guess.” Gavin picked up one of the turds and pulled it apart. It was lighter on the inside, but the consistency wasn’t very appetizing.

Jamie opened the fridge. “Did you make the stew stuff?”

“I started. Shit.” A pan on the burner boiled over, pumping out a reek of burnt milk. Gavin grabbed the pan and threw it the equally overflowing sink. “Let’s just fucking go.”

Jamie bit his lip to hide a laugh and then straightened to face Gavin. “Was the crab already in there?”

“No.”

“Okay, then. I can fix this.” Jamie grabbed a tub of cream cheese, and some other likely looking stuff from the fridge, then looked through Gavin’s cabinets, finding a can of artichoke hearts and then a bowl.

“You can cook?”

Jamie shrugged. “I can stir. My mom made this hot crab dip for her card parties about once a month. I can do something like that. You got any cheddar?” He dug back through the fridge.

Gavin hipped Jamie out of the way and pulled out a brick of cheese. “I have Havarti.”

“What’s that?”

“Kind of cheddar with a Danish accent.”

“Shred it.”

As Gavin rooted around, Jamie tossed mayo and sour cream into the bowl and picked up the cream cheese. “What the fuck are pimentos anyway? And why screw up cream cheese with them?”

Gavin made a sound like a laugh and shook his head, but his voice was cool when he said in a

bored superior tone, "They are made from cherry peppers. Like the red ones, but sweeter."

Jamie spun toward him and pinned him against the counter. "Nope. You used to get away with that, but not anymore. I'm onto you, Montgomery. You aren't shaking your head at me, you're shaking your head at yourself. Spill."

"Haven't I spilled enough for one kitchen?"

Jamie put his hands behind Gavin's neck. "Nope. Not working. You're going to have to get a new game face, because this one doesn't work on me anymore."

Gavin spread his hands out. "I wanted to offer something real. That I did myself."

"You went to Harvard—"

"Yale," Gavin corrected.

"Whatever. But you're as dumb as shit sometimes, Montgomery."

"Thank you." Gavin tried to pull free.

"Stop. Jesus. Something real? You don't think that shelter's real? That those kids aren't sleeping someplace warm with a bed they didn't have to fuck to get because of you?"

"That was the money."

"No, Gavin. It was you. You did it. Dragged me and half the city with you. But it was you."

Gavin blinked slowly and his body relaxed a fraction.

"Besides," Jamie went on, "you don't think Quinn and Eli would trade me for you any day?"

"That reminds me."

Jamie recognized that tone too. "Ah shit. Beach is coming, isn't he?" He got that the guy was trying to be less of an asshole, but Jamie wasn't about to forget that Beach had almost gotten Gavin killed. Twice.

"Eli likes him."

"Yeah, well, Eli's easy. He even likes me." Jamie went back to cobbling together his crab dip.

“Huh. Think I’ll try to set Beauchamp up for trouble. I’m dying to see Fonoti put the overgrown brat over his knee.”

Five minutes of scrambling around and it was close enough. Now it just needed to bake. Jamie dipped a finger in and then licked it. “Close enough.” He double dipped and held out the smeared lump to Gavin.

Gavin bent his head, eyes on Jamie’s and wrapped lips, mouth, tongue around the dip on Jamie’s finger. Then Gavin sucked, slow. Steady.

“Mmmm.” Gavin drew back, leaving Jamie’s finger and balls tingling.

“So.” Jamie cleared his throat. “Now it’s got to bake for at least half an hour.”

“Good. I’ll take Annabelle for her walk.” Gavin’s smile was pure evil.

“Like hell you will.” Jamie dragged Gavin to him and kissed him.