



Becoming Someone Else

by PattRose

illustrated by Luna_61

It had been an over a year since he started teaching at the University of Washington, in Seattle. He almost loved it there. He had a fairly nice apartment, a pretty good job and great students. He missed the friendship he once had with everyone in Major Crimes, but he had finally broken free of Jim and his attitude. Jim had agreed to never bother him again and Blair was happy. Well, sometimes he was happy. All right, so he wasn't that happy.

It all started after Blair had told everyone he was guilty of academic fraud and that everything was his fault. He and Jim parted ways shortly after that. Jim agreed that they would be better off without the other one hanging around. Jim actually believed that Blair sold him out to the publishing company. Blair couldn't get past that and it

seemed that Jim couldn't either. Jim didn't know that Blair sued the publishing company and won. Blair also sued the university and could have gotten his teaching job back at Rainier, but decided against it. Jim also didn't know that Blair was moving to Seattle in two weeks. Blair sent him a letter and told him he wished him well and that he didn't want Jim to ever look for him. Jim didn't call or write back, so Blair went ahead with the move. Secretly, Blair had hoped that Jim would come over to talk about things, but who was he kidding? Jim didn't talk about things-that was part of the problem they had.

Blair had told one person about his move to Seattle and that was Simon so that Simon could keep him informed about Jim now and then. Blair didn't want a report all the time, but if something happened to Jim, he wanted to know. And so Simon had agreed not to tell anyone where he was going. He also agreed that he wouldn't contact Blair unless something happened to Jim. Blair felt like he wasn't totally alone having someone else know where he was.

Blair had no clue as to what Simon did after they talked. Simon called an old friend named Tom Carson, who was a detective with Seattle police and asked him to keep an eye out on Blair. Simon didn't expect him to babysit or anything like that. No, what Simon wanted to know is if he got arrested or anything that involved the police. Tom Carson said he would try to do his best, but he couldn't promise anything. Blair had his right to privacy and Tom Carson understood that.

So now Blair was in Seattle, teaching a class he wasn't that crazy about, but he had terrific students. And not once had anyone ever stopped him to call him a fraud. Blair was settling in and had found someone nice to settle in with. Or at least that's what Blair thought at the time. He didn't know Blake Avery too well when they moved in together. Blair looked back and realized he had been foolish and had to pay for those mistakes now.

Blake Avery was a tall, good looking man that everyone seemed to adore. And Blair thought he was a good choice for a friend. All Blair knew for certain now was he had to get away from Blake as soon as he could, or he'd be dead. The wonderful man turned out to be abusive. Blair got away from him, after the first time, but he wasn't far enough away. He needed to move from Seattle. Blair sighed at the thought of giving up everything and moving again. He had just gotten the one bedroom apartment two weeks ago, but Blake had found him and beat the shit out of him. The neighbors had called the police. They did make a lot of noise because Blair didn't go down easily. Of course, Blair didn't file charges because he didn't want anyone to know. Yes, he knew he was being stupid, but instead he was going to just up and move. Blair had called his advisor and told him he wouldn't be back. His advisor didn't seem surprised. Everyone

wondered why he was sporting black eyes and bruises that one time. Blair suspected that the man that helped get him that job was probably glad he was leaving.

Blair was pretty much packed and figured he would leave in the morning. He wasn't sure where he was going. That would be a guessing game. He didn't like to get too far from Cascade, but why? Jim hadn't contacted him in over a year. Why should Blair care anymore? He brushed his teeth, washed up and slipped into his bed for the night. Blake would leave him alone for now. Blair knew him that well. Now, he could sleep.

In Cascade

Simon was getting ready to go to bed when his phone rang. He figured it would be work and dreaded answering it. He was tired, damn it. "Banks."

"Simon, it's Tom Carson from Seattle. Remember how you asked me to keep an eye on Blair Sandburg? Well, it might be time to tell you what he's going through. At first I questioned telling you, because it's really none of your or my business. But after tonight, I wanted to make this call."

"What's going on, Tom?" Simon never wanted a cigar as bad as he did right then. Somehow he knew this was bad news.

"We got called out one night about two weeks ago for domestic abuse, but of course Blair wouldn't press charges. We talked to him and he said he was abused just that one time. Blair planned a move away from the abuser, but the abuser found him and attacked Mr. Sandburg again tonight. And for the record, Mr. Sandburg never pressed charges again. This guy that's beating him is named Blake Avery. Tonight when I got there, Blair was packing to move somewhere and Blake said it was a misunderstanding. Blair asked him to leave while I was standing there and Avery did. Blair told me I wouldn't have to worry about him anymore. Blair's either blowing town or he's going to kill himself. I couldn't tell you which one. But Blair looked desperate and scared tonight. Maybe you could call him."

"Better yet, I'll be up there in an hour and I'll talk to him in person. And if he wants to leave, he can come back with me," Simon said, hurriedly.

"Thank you, Simon. I'm sorry, I'm telling you all this, but Avery has a record and it's not a good record. I hope you can help Sandburg in some way-you know him after all."

“Thank you, Tom. I won’t say a word to anyone else. In fact, I might not say a word to Blair. Just give him the offer of my house for a month or two until he gets on his feet.”

“Good, I think I made the right call. God, I hope so. He’s one of the good ones,” Tom replied.

“I will mention nothing to him. He won’t know. I’ll make up some reason I’m there. He’ll believe me. We’re good friends.”

“Good luck, Simon and I hope to hell he gets the help he needs. Got a pen for the address?”

Simon wrote it all down and closed his phone. *What in the hell are you going to say to him when you see him?* Simon knew he had an hour’s drive to figure it out. He finished getting ready and was out the door in record time.

In Seattle one hour later:

Simon pulled into the parking lot of the apartment building and found the apartment and knocked on the door. He heard someone breathing behind the peep hole and knew Blair was there. Simon knocked once more and softly said, “Sandburg, it’s Simon. Can I talk to you?”

Blair opened up the door and Simon was hit with the damage this Avery character had done to Blair. He had two black eyes and a swollen jaw. And his hands were all bruised and battered like he had put up one hell of a fight.

“Can I come in?”

“Yes, come in. Who called you, Simon? Was it the policeman that came tonight, because I’ll have his ass for this?”

“No one called me, Kid. But should they have?” Simon shut the door behind him and watched Blair limp over to the sofa.

“Why are you here, Simon?” A very tired and pained voice asked.

“It’s about Jim.”

Blair immediately got upset. “What happened to him?”

“Nothing, but I might have to suspend him from his job and I thought maybe you could see him and tell me what to do.”

“Simon, what’s going on?”

“He’s zoning three to six times a day while in the office. I don’t know how many times while out on a call. Megan Connor won’t tell me the truth, so I don’t know for sure. But I can’t have him zoning in the line of fire, Blair. He’s got to be 100 percent out in the field.”

“Of course. Maybe I could come back for a while and talk some sense into him. I’m all packed, but I have nowhere to go,” Blair seemed very sad, all of a sudden.

“You’ll stay with me. In my spare room. He doesn’t even have to know you’re in town right away. I’ll put him on desk duty for the time being and you can recover from whatever you’re recovering from. What happened, anyhow?”

“What happened? I left Cascade. I never should have left there. It wasn’t good for either of us.”

“No, I mean what happened to your face?” Simon asked kindly and gently.

“I met someone I thought would be good to me. He wasn’t like Jim. Jim can be an ass, but he would have never raised a hand to me.”

Simon looked thoughtful for a moment and asked, “Were you and Jim a couple when you left?”

“Yes...”

“I’ll put him on desk duty and you have to heal up before you see him. Then you can work your magic. Okay?”

“I don’t know that there is any magic left, Simon. It’s been over a year and he’s not contacted me once.”

“He asked me to find you one day because he hadn’t heard from you since you left your apartment. I thought you would have at least said goodbye.”

“Simon, honestly, I sent him a letter. I asked him not to contact me, but I did tell him goodbye. I didn’t tell him where I was, though.”

“I really don’t know what happened, Blair, all I know is he’s going to get killed one of these days, or someone else is while he’s partnering with them. Let’s get you over to my place in Cascade and we’ll see how quickly you heal.”

“Simon, you couldn’t have come on a better day. I was lower than I’ve ever been in my life. I didn’t know what to do and was afraid to do it because of Blake.”

“Don’t worry about Blake. If he comes near you again, I’m shooting the fucker,” Simon pulled Blair in for a gentle hug because of all the bruises.

“Thanks man.”

“Where is your car, Blair?”

“It broke down, so I decided to use the transit system. It works for me. Jim would have had a fit about it, but I found it relaxing to have someone else driving.”

Simon helped him load up the car and then they were off.

“Did you quit your job, Blair?”

“Yes, I called my advisor tonight and he sounded relieved to be rid of me. They don’t like this kind of drama.”

“No, I don’t suppose they do. What is this character’s full name, so I have it in case I need it?”

“Blake Avery is his name. I don’t think he’ll bother me there because he knows I was friendly with cops. He doesn’t get on too well with them. I should have wondered about that from the start.”

Simon almost rolled his eyes, but thought better of it. This was no laughing matter. Simon had to worry about telling Jim about desk duty... tomorrow. That was not going to be fun.

Blair slept all the way back to Cascade and then helped bring things in from the garage, where Simon was parked.

“Blair, act like this is your home. Help yourself to anything you need in the kitchen or bathroom.”

“What I could use is a long hot bath,” Blair said.

Simon wanted to ask him questions, but he knew he couldn’t. It wasn’t for him to ask. Besides he had told Blair enough lies, he didn’t need to make it worse.

“You know where the main bathroom is. Go and take a long hot bath. I’m going to get a few hours’ sleep before I go into the office. You don’t worry about a thing.”

“Thanks, Simon. For everything. As I said before, you’ll never know how low I was tonight. Goodnight. Sleep well.”

Simon almost teared up. This was so Blair. Worrying about Simon instead of himself.

“Thanks, Blair. I’ll see you tomorrow night.”

Blair went into the spare room and shut the door. Simon wished he had Sentinel hearing so he could tell what Blair was doing. Simon just had to trust Blair and he walked down the hall, taking his shirt off as he neared his room. *God, I’m tired.*

The Bullpen, the following day:

Simon knew he was going to have to take care of business right away. He walked to his office door and said, “Ellison, my office.”

Jim looked pained. Simon figured he had another headache. Jim had them all the time. He had also lost a lot of weight since Blair left.

“You needed to see me, sir?” Jim poked his head in the door and hoped it wasn’t bad news.

“Come on in and shut the door. We need to talk. Sit down and relax,” Simon said.

“I’m on desk duty, right? Or are you firing me altogether?”

“Desk duty. I thought you might figure it out. I’m sorry, Jim. But I have to think about your partner and anyone else that’s out there in the field with you.”

“I understand, Simon.” Jim got a whiff of something he hadn’t smelled in a long, long time. “You’ve seen Blair?”

“How in the hell do you do that?” Simon asked.

“My sight, hearing and smell just went back online. I’ve been off for quite a while.”

“Yes, but he doesn’t want to see you just yet. He got into a fight with someone and he doesn’t want you getting all Tarzan like with him.”

“Blair got into a fight?”

“Yes, why do you find that so hard to believe?”

“Because he wouldn’t hit anyone unless they were doing him bodily harm. He’s a pacifist, Simon. You know that. So I take it he was dating someone and the guy hit him?”

“Yes...”

“Is that all?”

“I don’t know, I didn’t ask,” Simon replied.

“Simon, what the fuck is going on?”

“Honestly, Jim, I don’t know. A policeman called me and was worried about Blair. Blair left that guy, but he found him and hit him again. Mind you, Blair has bruises on his hands, so I think he fought back.”

“And it never occurred to you to ask him about it?” Jim asked very sarcastically.

Simon glared at Jim. “It just so happens that I’m his friend and I already had told him some lies. Why dig into his life? If he wanted me to know, he would have said so.”

“Where was he?”

“Seattle and he said he sent you a letter, but you never contacted him, so he figured that was that.”

“I never got any fucking letter from him.”

“Take it up with the post office, Jim. Don’t yell at me about it.”

“Tell him I know about the jerk and I want to see him. I want to be sure he’s all right.”

“Jim, he’s sort of fragile right now. I think we need to give him time. Let’s let him heal up and he’ll call you,” Simon suggested.

“I don’t like it, Simon.”

“I don’t much care, Jim.”

Jim got the same defeated look on his face that Blair had last night and Simon decided to say something. “He told me that you guys had been a couple.”

“Yeah, we were. You got a problem with that, Simon?”

“No, I just can’t believe you let him go so easily.”

“Oh fuck you, Simon. You have no idea what I went through. He caused most of the problems, not me. I didn’t do anything but yet I’m still getting the shit treatment from everyone because he’s gone.”

“Wasn’t it Naomi who caused the problems when she sent the thing to her publisher friend? Didn’t that leave Blair to try and limit the damage done?” Simon asked, knowing he was right.

“Of course that’s what happened. But at the time I thought it was just Blair. I was so blinded by anger that I forgot who I should blame. It shouldn’t have been him. God, I fucked this up.” Jim ran a hand over his face, showing just how tired he was.

“He was teaching at the University of Washington, in Seattle. Don’t you find that odd that he got a job so easily?”

“How did he do that?” Jim wondered.

“I have no idea, but I do know that would be one of my questions when I saw him. After I begged his forgiveness and told him I loved him.”

“It’s not that simple, Simon.”

“Why not?”

“He left me, I didn’t leave him. He’s the one that should apologize. But of course, you’ll take his side. I already know that much.”

Simon got up and knelt down in front of the chair that Jim was sitting in. “I’m going to tell you this once and that’s all. I love both of you guys. So don’t ask me to pick sides. He won’t ask me and I expect you to do the same.”

“Can I come over tonight?”

“I don’t see why not. Just be ready to see him with a swollen jaw and two black eyes.”

“I’m going to have a hard time seeing that. But I promise I’ll be good.”

“Okay, why don’t you catch up on your files for today and answer the phone? Until you stop zoning, you’ll be desk bound.”

“Thanks for not firing me, Simon.”

“Just get out there and do your work.”

“You know where I am if you need me,” Jim said on his way out the door.

Simon smiled as his best detective left the office. Simon truly believed that Jim was getting his senses back in order just from smelling his Guide on Simon. There was something to be said about Sentinel and Guide. *What in the hell were these two men thinking?*

When Simon got home, he could smell dinner outside the door. *What a nice thing to come home to.* Simon hadn't had this happen since he was married.

He walked into his house and smiled at how clean it was. Blair must have cleaned all day long. "Hey Blair, I'm home."

"Hey, you timed it just about right. Dinner will be done in about 40 minutes. Can I get you a beer?" Blair asked.

"Blair, you're not my servant. I can get my own beer," Simon reminded him.

"Okay, grab me one, too, please?"

Simon laughed as he walked into the kitchen and grabbed two beers. Simon knew he needed to tell Blair that Jim was coming over, but didn't know how to do it.

While Simon was in the kitchen, the doorbell rang. When Blair opened up the door his mouth almost dropped to the floor. Jim was standing there carrying a bottle of Blair's favorite wine.

"Hello, Jim. Simon didn't tell me you were coming."

"Can I come in, Chief?" Jim tried not to take notice of the damage to Blair's face.

"Not my house, do whatever you want," Blair answered and left the door open.

"Simon walked out and said, 'Come on in Jim. You two are going to have to talk eventually, may as well be tonight.'"

"I don't drink that wine anymore," Blair said, curtly.

Jim's looked so disappointed that he had screwed up already. Simon had to feel bad for him.

Simon grabbed the wine and said, "Sit down. Do you want a drink of wine or a beer?"

"I'd like a beer, thank you."

Blair didn't know who he was supposed to be that night. It seemed he was performing, but wasn't sure of his character.

"So Jim, how are you doing at the station?" Blair asked, but not really sounding that interested.

Simon walked back out with the beer for Jim.

"You know what, I know where I'm wanted and where I'm not. I'm going to leave and make Blair more comfortable."

"At least tell him how you're doing," Simon stated.

"I got put on desk duty today. The only reason I'm not fired is because I'm a friend of Simon's. My life is shit. Does that make you feel better, Sandburg?"

"You are such a fucking asshole. It's not my fault. You had every chance to talk to me after I sent the letter." Blair was now pacing and very angry.

"I didn't get any fucking letter."

"Well, I sent it. What was I supposed to think, Jim?"

"Before I leave can I at least ask you how you are?" Jim almost whispered. After the yell from Blair, he decided to keep things toned down.

"I'm dandy, Jim. As you can tell."

"Goodnight, Simon. I'll see you in the morning." Jim walked out the front door and slammed it shut behind him.

Blair said, "This is exactly what I knew he would do. He would just yell and leave."

"Sandburg, you practically asked him to leave."

"Well, he's never done what I asked him to do before, since when did he start listening to me?"

"That man is totally lost, Blair. He's been with no one since you left. He's so lonely and I'm always afraid he won't be there the next day."

"You think he would kill himself?" Blair asked, somewhat shocked.

"No, not really. He's not the type. But he is the type to walk in front of bullets that are meant for someone else. He took one for Megan about six months ago. He shoved her out of the way and took it himself. Megan didn't even know the man was going to shoot. Now, you understand why I worry about him."

“Simon, I don’t even know who I am these days, I sure don’t want to be worrying about Jim’s mental health along with my own.”

“The timer’s going off. I guess it’s dinner time. Come on, we’ll eat something and feel better.”

“I’m not really hungry anymore,” Blair admitted.

“Tough, you’re going to eat anyhow, Blair. You’ve lost too much weight. Jim has too. You guys together make about one of your old selves.”

“Sit down, I’ll serve dinner. It’s chicken and dumplings. I hope you like that.”

“I do like chicken and dumplings, although I’ve never tasted yours.” Simon said as he sat down to eat.

Blair came walking back out and was carrying the big pan of dumplings. He set it on the table and said, “Eat up.”

“You’re sure you don’t want to ask Jim back over?”

“Yeah, I’m sure.”

“Okay, let’s eat then.” Simon started dishing up some on his plate and wondered if Naomi taught Blair how to cook. “Did you get this recipe from Naomi?”

Blair started laughing and said, “No, I got it online while I was in Seattle. Maybe you could take Jim a plateful after we finish eating.”

“That would confuse Jim. So we had better leave things as they are.”

They both started eating and Blair was actually enjoying the meal. Yes, he’d been a dick to Jim, but turnabout was fair play.

“Blair, I don’t want to ruin your dinner, but I think you need to press charges against Blake Avery, in order to move on. As long as he’s baggage, he could always come back to haunt you.”

“Would you go up to Seattle with me to press charges? And stay there with me until it’s settled?”

“I can’t, Blair, but I could send Rafe or Megan. How does that sound?”

“Maybe you could give Jim an order to go up there with me and we could talk on the way there and the way back.”

“Why would you want Jim to go if you can’t stand the sight of him?” Simon really wanted to know.

“I never said I couldn’t stand the sight of him. It just hurt. But maybe in the next few days I could talk myself into going with him.”

“I think it’s a bad idea. If the two of you argue, there is no place for the second one to go. I think Rafe would be your safer bet.”

“Then I won’t go. I would like Jim to go. I want Jim to see what I had up there. I’d like to clean out my office at the university and tie up some loose ends.”

“Fine. I’ll give you two days to ready yourself for a trip with Jim. I wouldn’t wish that on anyone. He’s been such a fucking bear lately.”

“Lately, or the last year?” Blair asked.

“Since you left. Everyone had been looking for you, but I told them it was none of their business. Maybe I should have let them look for you.”

“I’m fine, Simon. I learned a good lesson. And now I’m more careful.”

They finished eating dinner and then cleaned up the kitchen and Blair said, “I’ll be ready to go in the morning if you call Jim and ask him to drive me.”

“What about me sending Jim and Megan, she could be a buffer?”

“Just Jim, this is going to be hard enough as it is.”

“Okay, I’ll call him right now.” Simon walked out of the kitchen and into his bedroom and called Jim.

“Ellison.”

“Jim, would you do me a huge favor?”

“I would do anything for you, you know that,” Jim replied.

“Blair wants to talk to you alone and he thinks the best time to do it would be for the drive up to Seattle and back. He’s going to press charges against Blake Avery and pick up his things at the university.”

“Why would he want to go with me? You saw how much he hated me.”

“Jim, he’s confused. He doesn’t trust anyone else to go with him other than you. So can you do it or not?”

“I’ll take him. I’ll be there at 8:00 tomorrow morning. Tell him I’ll be outside waiting.”

“You’ll walk up to the fucking door, Jim. Let him know he still matters. Keep in mind he was with someone that he didn’t matter to at all.”

“Low blow, Simon.”

“The truth hurts sometimes, Jim. See you tomorrow morning. Bring an overnight bag in case. Maybe even for a couple of nights.”

“Okay. I’ll come to the door and knock tomorrow morning. See you both then,” Jim said as he hung up and wondered what in the hell he was doing.

At 8:00, Jim knocked on Simon’s front door and Simon opened it. “Come on in, Jim. He’s having a bit of a meltdown.”

“Because he’s going with me?” Jim asked, dreading the answer.

“No, because he’s going to have to see the man he hates so much. It must be painful to live through that twice.”

Jim walked over to Simon’s spare room and knocked. “Chief, come on out and we’ll talk a little before we take off. There is no time frame set. We can leave when you feel strong enough.”

Blair opened the door and peered out with his swollen jaw and black eyes and said, “You were always very caring when it came to victims.”

“I see you as fighter, not a victim. So don’t sell yourself short. You left him, you did the right thing.”

“Okay, I’m ready to go. Simon told me to pack a bag in case we have to stay there longer. Let’s go,” Blair said as he walked past Jim, rolling his suitcase behind him.

Jim looked at Blair and realized he had probably lost 20 pounds since they were together. And he didn’t need to lose any. *Live with it, Ellison, it’s all your fault.*

“Jim, I can hear the wheels turning in that brain of yours. I chose this life, you didn’t make me. So stop with the guilt. I can feel it pouring off you. We can’t get past this if you’re feeling guilty.”

“I’ll try and do better, Chief.”

“Goodbye, Simon. We’ll see you in a few days,” Blair said.

Jim smiled at Simon and said, “Have fun in the bullpen today.”

“You both have a good visit to Seattle. Have a good visit with each other and have a safe trip there and back.” Simon patted both of them on the back as they walked out the door.

They headed to Jim’s truck and Simon said, “Would you guys like to borrow my car instead?”

“No, I’m more comfortable in the truck. Thanks, anyhow,” Blair said and threw his suitcase in the back of the pickup and it fell next to Jim’s bag that was already back there.

Here goes nothing. They both thought at the same time.

As they drove, Jim finally said, “So tell me about how you got the job at the university.”

“Basically, you want to know why they hired me, right?” Blair asked, but he didn’t sound mad at all.

“Well, yeah. You told me that no one would ever hire you again. So, I believed that to be true.”

“I sued the publishing company and they in turned called Rainier as a witness. My lawyer ended up going after both of them and the jury found in my favor. I was awarded a great deal of money and a job offer back at Rainier that I could accept at any time.”

“This is terrific news, Blair. You could get your job back when you get back to Cascade, right?”

“Yes, I could, but I don’t know that I would. I don’t know. I’m quite confused about it.”

“You could change classes. Go with your minor in Psychology and see how you like that. It couldn’t hurt to try it out. You might have some bad feelings about anthropology since the entire law suit happened. What do you think?”

“I do like Psychology and wouldn’t mind teaching that. I’ll give it some thought. I also thought about writing a book or two because I make a good living off my savings.”

“I’m glad they had to pay for what they did. I’m sorry I took everything out on you. I missed you so fucking much.”

“You’re kidding? Why didn’t you try and find me, Jim?”

“You dumped me, Blair. I don’t get over being dumped that easily.”

“Oh, who are you kidding? If it had been a woman, you would have picked right up again with her. Why is it different with you and me?”

“Touche’.”

“Simon said you didn’t date anyone while I was gone. What were you thinking?”

“I was thinking you might come back. I was hoping you might come back.”

“Really? Do you mean all I would have had to do was call you and you would have come up to Seattle and visited me and we could have talked?”

“Yeah, that’s what I mean. I’m still in love with you. I don’t know how you feel, but I’m willing to wait and see what you think of the two of us being together again.”

Blair pulled one of Jim’s hands off the steering wheel and held it close to him. “I think I’m still in love with you, too. But I don’t want to rush into anything, Jim.”

“Why didn’t you call?” Jim asked.

“Same reason you didn’t, Jim.”

“We’re idiots?”

“More or less. More, I think,” Blair joked and felt good for the first time in a long while.

“So what are we going to do first?” Jim wondered.

“I need to clean out my office. My advisor called me and said I have a week. I don’t want him to throw away my things. There are things that belonged to us in there.”

“By all means, we’ll clean out your office first.”

“No, I’m going to do it alone while you go and get us lunch. Does that sound fair?”

Jim smiled over at Blair. “I can work with that.”

“What was the hardest part of being away from me, Jim?”

“Loving you. God, I miss that. I couldn’t imagine me being with anyone else after it was so perfect with you.”

“I feel like shit that I didn’t wait like you did. I’m an idiot, too.”

Jim pulled Blair’s hand up to his lips and kissed it softly.

“Thank you, Jim.”

“For what?”

“For continuing to love me through it all. You’re my best friend and you showed me just how close we were. I think I might not have been as good a person as you were.”

“Because you didn’t stay alone and miserable? I think you are the one that tried to move on. That’s not a bad thing.”

“But Jim, I didn’t want to move on.”

“That’s why your timing and character assessment was off. Normally, you would have figured that guy out in two seconds. But your timing was off, Blair.”

“Simon was right. He said talking would be good. Jim, I don’t know that I want to be with you anymore. Can you handle that?”

“Not really, but I’ll have to.”

Blair smiled at him and said, “I was hoping for that answer. Give me time, Jim.”

Blair told Jim all about Blake Avery on the rest of the drive. Jim was good and pissed off, but he was hiding it well.

“If you saw him today, would you try and kill him?”

“Nope, I would hold him while you called the police to have him arrested. I have no jurisdiction here. So, I have to be good.” Jim smiled at Blair and got a big one back from the love of his life. The only problem was Blair’s face was so swollen that his smile looked crooked and off center.

As they got close to Seattle, Blair told him where to go to get to the university. Once he pulled into the parking lot, Blair got out and said, “Give me about two hours. There is a sandwich shop right across the road; if you get some sandwiches, we can eat.”

“It’s a date, Blair.”

Blair smiled crookedly again, and jumped out of the truck. Jim got busy reading a book and watched the clock to keep track of time. After about an hour, he decided to walk over and get lunch for the two of them. By the time he’d get back, it would be time to pack Blair’s things into the truck.

Blair was right, the shop was close and had some excellent sandwiches to choose from. Jim busied himself looking at the menu, killing another hour.

Blair was working on his last box when the door opened and in walked Blake Avery.

Blair got behind his desk and said, "What do you want?"

"Like you have to ask. You're not leaving me so quickly this time. What do you think, you can just leave me behind and not have me follow you?"

"Yeah, I did think that. I'm pressing charges against you, you idiot, and I'll never have to see you again."

Blair was not expecting the speed that came from Blake's fist. He broke Blair's nose, first thing. Blair got dizzy and started sliding down to the floor and Blake went over and kicked him three times. Once in the head.

Blair's door opened up quickly and Jim grabbed Avery and put his arms behind his back. "Blair, I need you to call the police. 911, right now."

Blair pulled his cell phone out and did as Jim asked. Jim couldn't put cuffs on Blake because Jim wasn't a cop in that town. So, he just held on to his wrists just like they were cuffs.

Jim listened to Blair trying to breathe right with the broken nose and telling them where he was and who was with him. Within ten minutes, they were there and had Blake Avery handcuffed and put in the back of the police car. Tom Carson was one of the cops that arrested him and they were pretty rough in their handling of him.

"We need to have you at the hospital, taking pictures and everything on file. We can't do it without all that," Detective Tom Carson said.

"I'll go right away. My friend here will take me, this is Detective Jim Ellison from the Cascade police department."

Jim stuck his hand out and said, "Nice to meet you. I need to get Blair to the ER. See you there for pictures."

"We'll be there shortly. I'll call ahead to the hospital and let them know to expect you. We just have to get rid of this piece of shit." Carson walked out the door and Jim smiled after him.

"I think Blake Avery is in for a long, long night."

“Somehow, I don’t feel one bit bad for him. I think he broke my fucking arm,” Blair said, softly.

“Shit... Come on, Chief. Let me get you to the hospital. Can you tell me where it is?”

“Yeah, I’m not brain dead, just a bad judge of character.”

“We all are guilty of that from time to time. Do you want me to carry you, Chief?”

Blair looked appalled. “Not hardly. Damn him anyhow.”

Jim helped him get into the truck and yes, Blair did indeed have a broken nose and arm. Jim put his sirens and lights on and took off. Blair would have laughed if not for the pain he was in.

Jim found the ER and parked and helped get Blair through the door. They took him right back. Detective Carson had called ahead and said to watch for him and not to keep him waiting.

Jim went with them, Blair said that Jim was his better half. While it made Jim feel really good, it also made him think that maybe Avery had kicked Blair a couple of times in the head.

Jim grabbed the doctor and said, “I think he kicked him in the head.”

“We’ll be taking lots of pictures. Looks like a nice broken nose, a really bad broken arm and we’ll see the rest when we get his clothes off.”

Doctor Scott cut off some of Blair’s clothes because it was easier than taking them off over the head and arm.

“That was my favorite shirt,” Blair whined.

“Blair, we’re going to take you for X-rays and then we’ll set your arm and get your nose back where it should be,” the doctor explained.

“I’d just like to say that my friend didn’t hurt a hair on that ass’s head.”

“Good for you, Mr.?”

“Detective Ellison, Doctor.”

“Even better for you. I’m sure you were tempted to hurt him terribly,” Doctor Scott guessed.

“Yeah, but I had promised to not hurt him and I like to keep my promises.”

The nurse came in with a shot and the doctor gave Blair some pain medication to help deal with everything. Then X-ray came up for the patient and they took Blair downstairs for a CAT scan and X-rays of his face, ribs and arm.

They got downstairs and Blair looked at Jim and asked, "Don't leave, okay?"

"I'm not going anywhere, Chief. Just relax and let them do the X-rays and we'll get back to the room."

"I'm freezing my balls off, man."

The nurse started to laugh and he asked, "Did I just say that out loud?"

Jim laughed too and answered, "It's okay Chief. I'll ask them for a warm blanket. Okay?"

"That would be great, Jim. Just great."

They started taking him into the CAT scan room and he called out, "Jim?"

"I can't go with you, Blair. I'll be waiting right here."

"I'm freezing, man."

Jim looked at the three nurses and asked, "Do you think you could get him some blankets? He's freezing."

The first nurse named Susan said, "I'll go and get some warm ones. Be right back."

She came right back and covered Blair with warm blankets. He sighed with a happy sound and said, "That Jim is the best man in the world isn't he?"

One of the nurse kept giving bad looks at Jim. Jim finally said, "I'm a cop, I didn't do this."

Then they all hurried off in different directions.

Jim was listening from the next room and could hear Blair telling Susan a story.

"Jim is my lover from a year ago. We broke up but the new boyfriend beat me up, so Jim is back in my life again. I came to Seattle from Cascade to become someone else. I needed that. I needed to get away from Jim. But come to find out, maybe that's what I needed was his love. It certainly wasn't Blake's. My balls aren't freezing anymore. That blanket really helped. I'm having a lot of pain right now. Is that normal?"

Jim noticed a lot of commotion going on in the room and then he heard Blair's heart slow down. Jim jumped up and went running for the room and said, "What's happening?"

Susan grabbed Jim and said, "They have to get his heart on track again. Come with me, Jim."

Jim went but didn't like that Doctor Scott was there with a crash cart. And then Jim heard Blair's heartbeat get stronger once more and smiled. He turned to Susan and said, "He's back on track."

"How would you know?"

"Don't tell anyone, but I'm psychic."

Doctor Scott came out and said, "Jim, we have to take him to ICU for a little while. He's having some type of problem with an allergy to the medication I gave him. I've got a specialist coming in. So try not to worry."

"As long as I can stay close to his room."

Jim followed them as they pushed Blair out of the X-ray department and into an elevator. Once they got to ICU, they told Jim to sit in the waiting room and they would come for him when it was time.

Two hours later, they came and got him. Doctor Scott was standing next to Blair's bed, smiling. "He's doing much better, Jim. His blood pressure is back up and we're going to take him down to set his arm in a few minutes. The CAT scan was good. It was clear. He had a reaction to the medication. That's what slowed down his heartbeat."

"I thought maybe it was something like that. Thank you for the good news, Doc."

"You stay put in the waiting room on the second floor. That's where Blair is going to be going next. It's the orthopedic floor. Go and have some coffee and relax a little bit. It'll take about an hour to set his arm and reset his nose. We found something he can have, pain wise, so not to worry."

"Thank you for everything," Jim said as he headed out of the room after one longer look at his love.

Jim went and got a cup of coffee and sat in a waiting room and thought about what Blair had said. He had gone to Seattle to become someone else. God, what had Jim done? The coffee suddenly tasted like poison and he almost spit it out. But he didn't because a woman walked in and sat down across from him. She looked worried.

She noticed Jim looked upset too and asked, "Who are you waiting on?"

“My lover, Blair. He’s got lots of broken bones.”

“I’m waiting for my brother. He got hit while riding his motorcycle and they don’t know if he’ll be able to stay here or have to go to ICU. He’s pretty bad.”

“Which room is he in?” Jim asked forgetting about Blair for a moment.

“The first one, here. They won’t let me in there while they work on him.”

“Do you want to know what they’re saying?”

“How would you know?” she asked Jim.

“I’ve got excellent hearing.”

“Listen away, it couldn’t hurt.”

Jim did indeed listen and said, “He’s got a broken back, in eight places. His neck is sprained, his head is torn open, has a concussion and is bleeding internally, but the doctors are amazed at how well he’s doing.”

She sat next to Jim and said, “I know who you are. And I never believed that young man would have lied. So it’s true.”

“Yes, but I’m here for him, not for me. So could we keep this quiet?”

“What is your name?” she asked.

“Jim Ellison. I’m from Cascade, Washington.”

“I’m Mary Bryne and if you play your cards right, he will be happy once again. I just know it.”

Jim shook his head yes and said, “I understand, Mary. Thank you.”

The doctors came out of her brother’s room and told her everything Jim had said. The doctor also said that he was doing really well. All the beds in ICU were filled, so this was a good thing that he was doing that well. Mary squeezed Jim’s hand and whispered, “Thank you.”

She walked away with the doctors and the nurses and that was the last Jim saw of Mary.

Doctor Scott walked into the waiting room and said, “Jim, we have him settled in a room if you’d like to go and sit with him.”

“I would love that, Doc.”

Jim followed the doctor, but really didn't need to, since he could hear Blair's voice and heartbeat all the way there. "Take good care of him, Jim."

"Thank you for everything." Jim walked into the room and saw a smiling Blair. Man, he looked so bad.

There was a knock on the door and there were two cops standing there with Detective Carson.

"I hope you don't mind us intruding, but we need to get pictures. We're going to court tonight in front of a judge that won't like Avery very much when he sees what you look like, Sandburg."

"Take them. I'm fine with that," Blair said.

They had to strip Blair of his scrubs and blankets and take pictures of all the bruising and the broken arm and nose. Blair's eyes were so black and blue you couldn't even tell the color of his eyes anymore.

Once they were done, Jim got Blair dressed once more and covered him up. Jim got a couple more blankets and covered him up with those, too.

Carson asked, "Do you think he's cold?"

"He told me his balls were freezing. What would you do?"

Carson laughed and said, "I need to take your statement now. He's lawyered up, would you like one?"

Blair looked confused. "For what? Jim didn't touch him."

"He said Jim did it, not him. He's swearing to it."

"I should have hurt him when I had the chance," Jim whispered, but Carson heard him.

"If you had hurt him, Jim, they would have arrested you and not him."

"And how exactly is that different than what's going on right now?" Jim wondered.

Blair said, "Ask away. I'm getting tired, so you need to finish this quickly."

Carson asked all the questions he needed to and then they took pictures of Jim's fingers and hands. Jim knew they wanted to rule out him being the one that did it.

"Thank you both. Tell Captain Banks I said hello."

"Oh my God, you did call Simon," Blair said, sounding grief-stricken.

“I was trying to help, Blair. Please keep that in mind. I thought something would happen to you if I kept my mouth closed.”

Jim said, “Thank you for everything. We’ll talk to you tomorrow when Blair has rested a little bit.” Jim hoped that Blair wouldn’t even remember the statement that was made.

Blair didn’t say a word when Carson left. Jim pulled the chair over and sat down close to the bed. “Chief, you said something that has me thinking.”

“Everyone should say something that makes people think now and then.”

“You said you were trying to become someone else. What did you mean by that?”

“I’m really tired. We’ll talk tomorrow, okay?”

“Okay, Chief. Go to sleep and I’ll be here when you wake up.”

“Thanks, man.”

“I love you, Chief. Always have.”

Blair was breathing strangely because of the broken nose. And he was snoring like crazy. Jim laid his head down beside Blair’s stomach and fell asleep.

Jim heard an odd sound and realized it was his cell phone ringing.

“Ellison,” he whispered.

“Why are you whispering, Jim?” Simon asked.

Jim walked to the hallway and started talking. He filled Simon in on the entire night and Simon finally said, “I think I’ll come up tomorrow.”

“That would be nice. Thanks, Simon.”

“Did you two talk?”

“Yes, we talked, we discussed and we both still love each other, but it’s not as simple as that.”

“It’s just that simple, Jim. Don’t give him a choice this time. Love him with all that you are.”

“I’m trying, Simon. What time do you suppose you’ll be here?”

“About 8:00 or 9:00. See you then. Kiss him goodnight for me.”

Jim just smiled. He couldn't remember a time where he felt more like the two of them belonged together.

Blair rubbed Jim's hair at 7:00 that morning. Jim sat up and said, “Wow, I have to find a bathroom. I haven't been since we got here.”

“I have a handy dandy catheter, so I don't have to worry about that.”

“I wonder if I could get one,” Jim teased, making Blair laugh a little.

“I would have laughed harder but it hurts.”

Jim leaned down and kissed Blair on the lips, very softly and gently. “Good morning, Chief.”

“Go do your thing. I'll be here when you get back.”

As Blair watched Jim walk away he wondered, *What in the hell was he doing?*

When Jim got back to the room, Blair was sitting up looking out the window looking over the parking lot. He glanced at Jim and said, “I think I saw Simon drive up.”

“He's supposed to be coming. He said he was.”

“Jim, I don't want to be in love with you anymore.”

To say Jim was shocked, was putting it mildly. “You don't want to be, but you are?”

“I don't think so. I changed, Jim, and I want different things now.”

Jim looked sad and thoughtful at the same time. “Did you ever consider that maybe I would like some changes too?”

“Jim, people like you don't change. You are very rigid and unyielding. That's how you are. I've decided that I don't want that anymore. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to give off the wrong vibes.”

“Hey, if you don't want me anymore, I totally understand.” Jim looked out the window and saw Simon walking to the door of the hospital.

“Simon's coming up. I'm going to go and get some coffee. I'll be back later,” Jim said as he left the room.

Jim walked down the hallway and realized that Blair **had** become someone else and left Jim Ellison behind. Jim didn't have a fighting chance.

Simon walked in and was shocked to see no Jim standing next to the bed. He knew something was up.

"All right, Sandburg, did you two have a fight already?"

"No, I told him I moved on. I don't love him anymore."

"You told that to Jim Ellison, while he's in a hospital room with you, in a strange city?"

"I didn't want to string him along. He kissed me this morning and it meant nothing to either of us."

"You're so full of shit, Sandburg. I can't believe you drove him away. He was so happy last night because he thought he had a chance with you. And what do you do? You tell him you don't love him anymore. Do you happen to know where he is?"

Blair looked hurt that Simon was so angry at him. "I think he's down getting coffee."

"Where are you going from here, Blair?"

Blair thought for a moment and said, "I guess maybe teaching back at Rainier. I'm not sure yet. I've got time. I have money in the bank, Simon. Jim doesn't have to take care of me anymore."

"I can't believe you just said that. Jim has been alone for over a year. Thought of nothing but how much he missed you and needed you and what do you think about? You think Jim's off the hook for having to take care of you. I always thought relationships were for two people, not just one."

Blair had big tears in his eyes. He was hurt that Simon was being so cruel to him when Blair knew that Jim deserved everything he got. Or at least Blair thought that.

"I'm going downstairs to find Jim. I'll tell him to go home. You don't have to worry about him anymore either."

Simon stormed out of the room and Blair just sat there with tears rolling down his cheeks. He really had tried, but Jim wasn't the one for him. He needed someone different. Someone who had changed. Someone who had become someone else.

When Simon got back up to the room, he said, “I sent Jim back to Cascade. So, you’ll be free to choose whatever type of life you want. Good luck, Blair.”

“Now, everyone will be mad at me. This is exactly what he wanted,” Blair whined.

“And who do you think was mad at Jim for the last year? Every single person that knew you gave him hell. He never got a break.”

“They did?” Blair was in awe that anyone would ever defend him.

“We all thought he was nuts for leaving you. If he had just come to his senses sooner, it might have worked out. I’m sorry for both of you. Listen, I can’t stay, but you call me as soon as you’re out of the hospital and I’ll pick you up.”

“You’re pissed off at me, right? I knew it was a bad move going back there. You can’t go back to where you used to be. You can’t go back to who you used to be.”

“I think you changed and didn’t tell Jim changing was an option. It doesn’t matter now. Maybe he’ll now get on with his life. I would like to see him happy again. I would love to see him get married and perhaps have children.”

“Children? He’s never expressed a need for children.”

“He loves Daryl. He always has. Since he was very young, way before you came into the picture. Jim also has a couple of nieces from Steven and his wife, Nicole. He adores them. He talks about them all the time. They’re twins and are six months old. Jim has a picture of them on his desk. Does this sound like someone that would never be interested in having children?”

“Simon, I can’t do something my heart isn’t into.”

“Of course you can’t. But I just wish you would have let Rafe bring you up here. I think I got Jim’s hopes up. It’s a shame about the two of you.”

“We just never made a good couple. You didn’t even know about us at the beginning. No one did.”

“Well, I’ve got to leave. You call me when you’re ready to come home.”

Simon walked up to Jim’s truck in the parking lot and thought that Jim had zoned. He knocked on the glass and Jim jumped. Jim rolled down his window and said, “I’m thinking.”

“That’s something that everyone should do at least once a day,” Simon kidded.

“I’m here as his friend, I can’t desert him just because he doesn’t want to sleep with me or be a couple anymore. I’ll be home in a few days.”

“I think he does want to be with you, but he’s scared. His track record isn’t great.”

“Have a safe trip home, Simon, and please don’t be mad at Blair. He’s got a right to better his life if he wants to.”

“You’re right. Enjoy your time in Seattle. This is a lovely time of year here. Maybe you could take Blair to see a few things before coming home. Oh, I almost forgot. This came in your mail yesterday. It’s the letter from Blair, I believe. There is an apology letter from the mail service saying how sorry they are that they lost it for such a long time. But they wanted to deliver it now.”

“You’re not kidding? Blair did send a letter?”

Simon handed it to Jim. “Yes, he did indeed. Maybe you should read it.”

“I will, thank you, Simon.”

“I’ll talk to you later.”

“Drive safe, Simon.”

“Good luck with Blair, Jim.”

Jim watched him leave and Jim walked back into the hospital.

When Blair woke up from a quick nap, Jim was sitting in the chair reading a book.

“Hi, I thought you left.”

“Nah, I couldn’t leave my best friend in the hospital all alone. We don’t have to be a couple, Blair. But I expect us to still be friends, understood?”

Blair’s face lit up like a roman candle. “Yes, it’s understood.”

“Blair, I have a bit of news. I got the letter that you sent. Today.”

“What do you mean, today?”

“The post office delivered it to me with an apology and that’s why I never got your letter. Do you want me to read it?”

“It’s not important now, Jim. You can read it later if you’d like to.”

Jim smiled. “I’ve got a good book here if you would like to read it?”

“Why don’t you read it to me aloud so we can both enjoy it?”

“Sounds good to me,” Jim answered and started to get him up to speed on the book thus far and then began to read the book. It was a book by Lawrence Sanders and it was very good. As Jim read it, he saw Blair was enjoying it also.

About three o’clock that afternoon, Carson walked in and said, “He copped a plea, so you don’t have to go to court. There will be no trial. I actually thought it should go on trial, but the DA didn’t agree.”

Blair sat up a little taller in the bed and asked, “What did he get?”

“Six years and 40 hours of community service when he gets out.”

“Why did he cop a plea to that many years?” Jim wondered.

“The charge was attempted murder. We had a statement from the doctor that said you almost died, Blair. So we went with it. Plus he’ll be out in three, with good behavior.”

Jim growled. “Now that sounds more like it. Sad, but true.”

“Well, I just wanted to let you know that he’s out of your life for now. They have to contact me when he gets out, so I in turn will contact you. I don’t ever want to see you looking like this again,” Carson said.

After Detective Carson left the room, Blair asked, “Can you get us a room for tonight. I don’t feel like driving tonight. I’m still pretty sore.”

“I’ll gladly get a room for us, but the doctor hasn’t released you yet.”

“While you were down getting coffee they took the catheter out and Doctor Scott came in and said I could go home this afternoon. But before I got to tell you, you told me about the book, peaked my interest and Carson came in. Sorry about that.”

“Good, I’m glad you’re getting released then. I’ll go and get a room with two beds and we’ll get you checked out of here as soon as I get back.” Jim hoped that two beds would be okay.

“Okay, I’ll be waiting, Jim.”

Jim walked out of the room and asked a nurse if she knew of any hotels that were close by. That way he wouldn't have to drive far for a couple of days. She told him the best one to stay and where it was and Jim was off.

Once Jim got a room with two beds, he headed back to the hospital. When he arrived, Blair was sitting at the edge of the bed wearing clean scrubs and had taken a shower.

"You look like a new person." Jim really did sound happy for Blair.

"Thank you. I've got a long way to go, but I figure after a couple of days here, maybe we could head back and find a place for me to stay in Cascade."

"What do you think you'll look for? A house, a condo or an apartment?"

"I've always wanted a house and I could actually afford one this time. I could get a new car, too."

"Or you could buy a classic car that you like and have it fixed up to run like new. You know how you like the classics, Blair."

"That's an even better idea. Thank you. For staying here and just being my friend."

"We're friends first, Blair. I saw no reason for that to end."

Blair said, "I didn't have my clothes here so I'm wearing scrubs. Does that embarrass you?"

"Nah. I couldn't care less about what a person wears. Oh, I stopped and got you a new flannel shirt to replace the one they cut off. I knew that was your favorite, but maybe the new one could be a new favorite."

"That's was really nice of you. Did you already put our luggage in the room at the hotel?" Blair wondered.

"I sure did. Wasn't even thinking about what you would wear to the hotel. But scrubs suit you just fine."

Blair smiled his off centered smile and Jim realized he was starting to get used to that smile. Which sort of pissed Jim off.

"Jim, you look mad, what are you thinking?"

"I was thinking how much I would have liked to kill that stupid fucker for hitting you."

"That's negative thinking, we can't have that, Jim."

"Okay, thought is gone."

Blair laughed and said, "At least until you look at my face again."

"True, that."

Jim helped Blair get up and they brought a wheelchair in to take him downstairs.

"I always hate this part. You feel like such an invalid, don't you agree?"

Jim let out a bark of laughter and said, "You know I don't know. They never get me to sit in one."

"Oh yeah, that would be you, the butt head that all nurses know and dread."

The nurse that was pushing Blair burst out laughing.

They got downstairs and Jim ran and got the truck. And just like that they were off.

Simon hadn't heard anything bad from Carson or Jim, so Simon figured Jim and Blair had figured out how to handle it. Simon truly believed that Blair still loved Jim, he was just leery of him now. Life usually had a way of working out, you just had to be patient and Jim seemed to be taking a new approach, which in turn might do the opposite for Blair.

When they were settled in the hotel, Blair called Rainier. He knew that Edwards was no longer there and Eli Stoddard had taken her place. He called and asked for Chancellor Stoddard and Eli got right on the line when he found out who it was.

"Blair Sandburg, it has been too long. What is going on with you?" Stoddard asked.

"I was thinking about looking for a position at the university, do you have any openings?"

He quickly answered, "We have one opening that you'd be perfect for. How would you like to teach beginning psychology? Your minor was in psychology, if I remember right, so this was like it was meant to be."

"You have a good memory, Eli. That would be great. When does it start?" Blair asked.

"In six weeks, when school starts up again. Would that work for you?" Stoddard asked.

“Yes, I will come and sign up for it as soon as I get back to Cascade. I was in a car accident in Seattle, so I’m in pretty rough shape right now. I’ll be doing well by the time the class starts. Thank you for speaking with me so quickly.”

“When can you come in, Blair? And I certainly hope you’re all right after that car accident.”

“How does three days from now sound? And please don’t be alarmed at my black eyes and broken nose and arm. I’ll be fine soon. Thank you for your kind sentiments.”

“Three days would be Friday, Blair. That’s perfect. I’ll see you at 3:00.”

“Goodbye and thank you for everything, Eli,” Blair said before he hung up.

Blair turned to Jim and said, “I have a job.”

“I heard. Congratulations. It’s a little hard to not overhear phone calls while in the same room,” Jim admitted.

“Do you think you could pick up dinner to eat here tonight? I’ve about had enough of people staring at me. Not to mention they look at you like you did it.”

“Sure, I’ll go and pick something up. There’s a Chinese place across the street. Does that sound good?”

“That does sound good. Thank you.” Blair sat down by the window and watched cars go by.

Jim asked, “Do you want to ride along? You could get out and not have to stay inside the entire time.”

“Are you sure you don’t mind being seen with me?”

“Fuck em’, Blair. It’s none of their business anyhow.”

“In that case, how about eating at the restaurant? I get stir crazy in hotel rooms,” Blair confessed.

Jim smiled and said, “Tell me about it.”

“In that case, I could take a short nap before we go.”

“Sure, dinner is a ways off anyhow. Rest and I’ll be here when you get up.”

“Maybe you could read to me some more. That’s very relaxing and I might sleep easier that way.”

Jim smiled again and got the book out.

“Lie down, and relax. I’ll sit right here and read.” He started reading the next chapter and only got into about one entire page and Blair was sleeping. Jim decided to lie on his bed and take a nap, too.

Jim woke up when he heard Blair moaning. Jim jumped up to see if something was wrong, but Blair was just having a bad dream. Jim looked at his watch and saw they had slept two hours, so he woke Blair up.

“Hey, Chief. Do you feel like dinner?”

“Oh my gosh, I slept way too long. I’m sorry, Jim.”

“Chief, I slept for two hours and just woke up before you.”

“Well, to be honest, you’re probably just napping from boredom.”

“Actually, I feel rested and refreshed now. I’m starving,” Jim added.

“Let me see what my hair looks like.” Blair let out a shriek when he got in the bathroom and said, “I can’t believe you didn’t say anything about my hair. I look like Bozo the Clown.”

Jim started laughing and couldn’t seem to stop. Blair was alarmed for a moment and then realized that Jim was probably just relieved to laugh once again. Then Blair laughed along with him and both of them got ready to go.

When they arrived back at the hotel after dinner, Jim said, “I’m going to take a shower. Yell if you need me.”

While Jim was in the shower, there was a soft knock on the door. “Yeah, Chief, what’s up?”

“I need to use the toilet, could I come in really fast?”

“Yeah... I’m just going to be taking my shower,” Jim answered.

Blair glanced at the shower stall that was pure glass and saw how great Jim looked naked and he pulled his eyes off Jim quickly. He had no right to be looking at Jim like that anymore.

When he was done, he flushed the toilet and washed his hands. Then he left saying, "Thanks, man."

Jim leaned against the wall and pounded his forehead a few times, softly. *What are you thinking, Ellison? You still want him.*

Jim got dressed in his sleep pants and walked out to the room. He looked over at Blair and asked, "You doing okay, Chief? Are you certain we don't need to pick up some pain medication for you as the doctor prescribed?"

"You saw what happened the first time I got pain meds. I don't want to deal with that ever again. I have Tylenol and that'll work for the night."

Both men watched the Animal Network but they watched in silence. It was driving Jim nuts.

"You getting sleepy, Chief?"

"Actually, I'm hungry for ice cream. I wish they had ice cream at this hotel."

"I'll be back in a flash. I saw an ice cream place two blocks away. Can I surprise you with something that I think you might like?"

"Sure. Thank you, Jim."

Jim got dressed very quickly before he left and found the ice cream place with no problem. The nurse had been right. This hotel was surrounded by anything you could need.

Blair sat on the bed, wondering what in the hell he was doing. *Don't even say you don't love him anymore. You would only be trying to fool yourself.*

Blair didn't know what he was going to do, but he needed to talk to Jim. After all, they were still best friends. Maybe Jim could tell him what to do. Sighing, Blair lay back on his bed and tried to relax.

Jim opened the door and walked in carrying four small cartons of ice cream. "I hope you're good and hungry because I couldn't make a decision and picked four." We have a smorgasbord."

“Wow, there is no way we’re going to eat that much ice cream, man.”

“Blair, they are only one scoop each. So we each get two scoops.”

“What kind did you get me?” Blair asked.

“Chocolate-peanut-butter swirl and pecan praline. I got cherries jubilee and Snicker’s ice cream.”

“Man, they all sound good. What about us sitting on the same bed and sharing from all of the little cartons?” Blair suggested.

“Sounds like a plan to me. Oh, let me run back to the truck. I got us each an Espresso too.” Jim rushed out of the room and was back in a flash. It helped being on the first floor.

Jim found Blair already on his bed with all four kinds of ice cream surrounding him. Jim handed him the Espresso and said, “Let’s dig in.”

They opened all four containers and started taking bites out of the other one’s carton.

Blair smiled when he tasted the cherries jubilee and said, “I’ve never had this before. I didn’t even know you liked cherries.”

“I never have. Thought I would try something new. And I’ve never tried the pecan praline and it’s delicious. I understand why you love it so much.”

They finished all four of the containers and Blair said, “Time to vote. What was your favorite ice cream?”

“Snickers, hands down,” Jim replied laughing.

“Mine, too. It was really good,” Blair agreed.

Jim collected all of the containers and threw them away. Then he got a wet paper towel for each of them to wipe their faces and hands.

“Thanks, Jim. This has been a great day and evening. I might try and go to sleep.”

“Okay...”

“Why don’t you watch television while I try and get some sleep? I know you’re not tired, but I am.”

Jim smiled. “Okay, Chief, I’ll keep the sound down low. Sweet dreams. If you need anything, just yell.”

“Thank you for everything, Jim. Goodnight.”

“Goodnight, Chief.” Jim settled under his sheet and watched the beautiful giraffes and wondered if he would ever see them in the wild sometime. *Are you planning a trip to Africa?* Jim almost laughed out loud. Blair was right. Jim didn’t change easily. In fact, Jim didn’t like change at all.

At midnight, Jim turned the tv off, shut the light off in the bathroom and slid into his bed. He was finally tired. It had been a long exhausting day. He could smell Blair in the room and his cock came to life. Jim turned on his stomach and sighed with frustration. *Get a grip, Ellison.*

At two in the morning, Jim heard Blair sniffing as if he was crying. Jim listened closer and realized that Blair was crying. Jim jumped out of bed and went over to Blair’s bed, stood there and asked, “What’s wrong?”

“You deserve to be happy, Jim. I’m making you miserable.”

“Did I seem miserable tonight, Chief?”

“No, but you must be. Or maybe you’ve fallen out of love with me.”

“You told me that you didn’t love me anymore. I told you I was here as your friend, only. Which do you want, Blair?”

“I don’t know what I want, Jim. One minute I want you and the next minute you make me crazy.”

“Blair, just tell me what the fuck you want. Do you want me to stay here or do you want me to get my own room? I can do either.”

“I knew you would get mad. I knew it.”

“I’m not mad, I’m tired. I haven’t slept much in the last few days. I was trying to catch up.”

“Jim, what would you do if I said I needed you to hold me in your arms tonight?”

“I would say no. We would both be wrong in doing that. I don’t know what you want, but that’s not on the agenda.”

“Can I sleep with you?” Blair asked.

“Again, Blair, bad move.”

“So you never want to sleep with me again?” Blair asked.

“I’m getting mixed signals here. Do you want me to say yes or no? I’m so fucking confused.”

“And you’re mad again.”

Jim slid on the bed with Blair and said, “I’m not mad. I’m going to go to sleep and you can do whatever you want. I’m tired. You need your rest.”

Jim pulled the covers up over himself and punched the pillow a few times to fluff it up. Then he relaxed and lay there waiting for Blair’s next move.

Blair took his good arm and held Jim’s hand closest to him. “Maybe we’re both someone else, Jim.”

“Could be, Chief.”

“Do you still love me?”

“It could be arranged,” Jim teased.

“I’m serious, Jim.”

“Yes, Blair, I still love you.”

“Good, I’m glad. I love you too.”

“Now, go to sleep, Blair. You need your rest.”

“Goodnight, Jim.”

“Goodnight, Blair.”

That was the last thing Jim remembered for the night. When he woke up, he heard Blair in the bathroom and he was lying there in bed with a raging hard-on.

He got up to see if he could walk it off, but it didn’t seem to be working that well.

Blair came out of the bathroom with his boxers, tented and said, “It seems we have a problem.”

Jim walked over to Blair and asked, “Are you going to stay with me?”

“Forever, Jim.”

“Then we don’t have a problem. I’ll do the work for a while. You can’t with a broken arm and sore muscles and ribs. Not to even mention trying to breathe out of that poor nose. I’m going to make you feel like a million bucks.”

“Jim, let’s wait until we get home. I want to be in our own home. Can we go home today?”

“We can leave as soon as you wish,” Jim answered.

“Maybe a blowjob before we leave. I could go for one of those, but I can’t breathe out of my nose, so I can’t give you one.”

“I’ll take care of me while I take care of you. Don’t you worry about a thing. Lie on the bed and let me work my magic.”

Blair practically ran to the bed. Jim took his pants off just as quickly. “You just lie there and relax and come. That’s all you need to do. You can watch me if you want, because I’m going to fist my own cock while you come into my mouth.”

“Could you start now?”

“I love you, Blair.”

“I love you, too, Jim.”

Jim took Blair’s cock into his mouth and began to hum and suck at the same time. He was holding on to Blair’s ass, moving his cock in and out of his mouth. Jim loved sucking cock. God, it had been so long.

Jim thought about that for a moment and lost all his sexual drive. His cock was limp in no time. Blair asked, “Second thoughts?”

Jim got really angry. He had tears rolling down his face as he said, “I love you so much. You almost threw us away. I’ve been alone for over a year. It just hit me, how lonely I had been.”

“Jim, come up and lie with me. Come on.”

When Jim got there, Blair kissed him softly and said, “I’m sorry I left you all alone. I should have known you would wait for me. I knew all along that you’re a good man and I wanted to believe that things wouldn’t work out for us, but I was insane. I want you. I need you and I love you so much, Jim.”

Jim moved back down and started sucking on Blair again. This time Jim was there for it. He sucked Blair until Blair couldn’t hold it any longer and he came down Jim’s warm, inviting throat.

Then Jim got up and went to the head of the bed and started jacking off. He was going to give Blair a taste of him that he hadn't had in a long while. Blair thought it was one of the sexiest things Jim had ever done in his life. And before long he said, "Open up, Blair."

Blair opened his mouth and Jim shot his come down Blair's throat, making Blair almost gag. But Blair didn't mind at all. Blair licked his lips and smiled. "Holy shit, that was hot, Jim. You became someone else, too."

"We both did and it's going to be just fine. You're going to be teaching again. I'm going to be a cop until I can't anymore and we'll be together, forever. It's a perfect ending for a perfect day."

"Let's get cleaned up and go home, man."

"I couldn't agree more." Jim said as he started packing things as quickly as he could.

Blair was rushing around with him getting dressed and happy as could be.

He looked over at Blair and said, "Bozo, you might want to tame down your hair."

"Jesus, this hair is awful, isn't it?"

"I happen to love your hair."

"Come on man, let's get out of this town. It's time to go home,"

They both looked a little worse for wear, but it was okay. They could take care of things when they got home.

The end