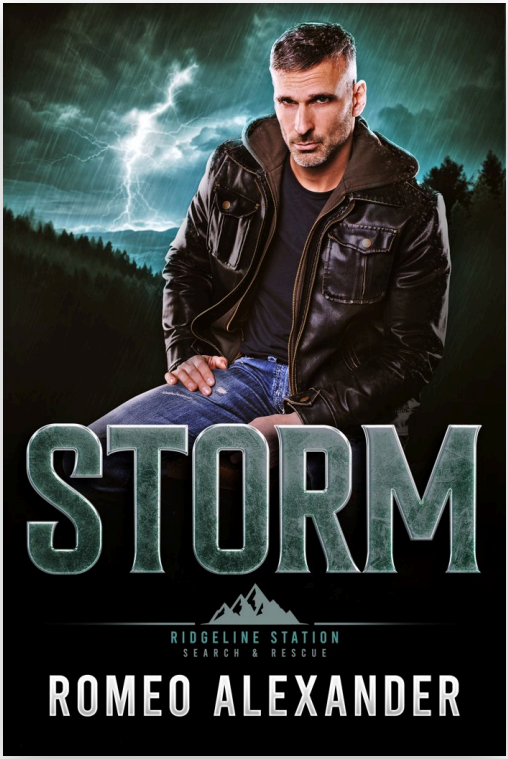
BONUS SCENE · RIDGELINE STATION

Storm



Romeo Alexander

Best read after you've finished the book.

BEFORE YOU START

Author's Notes

Howdy,

Time for another bonus scene, this time from the latest series featuring our Search and Rescue boys. Obviously, this is Xander and Colin, our grumpy leader and his far more personable other half who doesn't take shit.

I realized there was something that kept getting alluded to and teased in the book but never quite got delivered. I'll get it out of the way now and just admit that yes, it's a sex scene. I promise, it didn't get left out because I wanted to make it a bonus scene; it just, well, with the way the book went, it never found its way in.

So for those who have read the book, you'll probably recognize it, and for those who haven't, go read the book and then come back and read this!

Okay, so for those of you who have read the book, here is the much-vaunted, much-teased shower scene, in all its glory.

Oh, before I forget, this takes place chronologically during a later book in the series. It will be addressed, of course, as it's too juicy not to, but only you as a subscriber are able to see the scene now. A little extra

gift, so thank you, and now for real, here's that thanks in action.

THE SCENE

Xander & Colin

"Does this ever get less weird?" I asked Cait, leaning against her doorway and frowning at the rest of the building.

"What, the peace and quiet?" she asked with a snort.

"Actually, yeah," I said, then laughed when she gave me a surprised look. "What? I mean, when does this building ever get this quiet?"

"When all of you are out on a call," she said honestly. "Half of you snore like old men, so I can't even tell when it's bedtime."

"Cait?"

"What?"

"How much trouble would I be in if I mentioned I've been near your cabin when you're asleep and have heard you from a good distance?"

"Depends on how much you think being Xander's first boyfriend is worth."

I lolled my head to look at her with a smirk. "I don't think I could get away with it easily because I'm sleeping with him and have him wrapped around my little finger."

She grinned, looking delighted. "Oh, we're being that honest?"

"What? He is," I said with a shrug. "I have no intention of abusing that power, don't worry."

"And who said I was worried?"

"Me. You think I didn't notice the way you were ready to beat Mona into the ground until she was human jam?"

Cait's nostrils flared at the name. "The fewer reminders of that foul, cruel, hateful, spite-filled bitch, the better."

"Oh, please don't hold back on my account," I said dryly. "By all means, let your hair down and tell me how you really feel about her."

"You're cute, kid. But you're not *that* cute," she warned me.

"I'm adorable," I told her lightly, but I knew the sound of thin ice cracking under my feet. "But fine. Better to keep your peace so you can keep your head."

She looked at me, amusement glinting in her eyes. "It's nice to see someone around here still has some sense. Even if it is a sense of self-preservation. I suppose it will be a good example to set now you're second in line."

I frowned. "I am not. He doesn't have a second."

"Sure he does," she said, looking me over. "And I'm looking at him."

"You're insane," I told her.

"You wouldn't be the first person to tell me that," she chuckled and leaned back in her chair, trying to see around me at the sound of heavy footsteps. "That you, Jake?"

“And me,” Reno said, both men peering around my shoulders. “What’s up?”

“Do we have a second in command?” she asked, and I sighed when both guys immediately looked at me, puzzled.

“Are we not looking at him?” Reno asked, emphasizing his point by sounding as confused as he looked.

“No,” I said with a scowl. “You’re not.”

“I mean, it’s not like you were assigned or anything,” Jake said, scratching thoughtfully at his jaw. “But uh, you’re definitely the guy that keeps us in line when Big Boss isn’t around.”

“Yeah, speaking of,” Reno said, peeking up at me from under my arm. “Why exactly does he act weird sometimes when we call him that? I mean, he didn’t dislike it before.”

I pulled my arm back to cross it over my middle. “And why are you asking me?”

“I’m just saying, it wasn’t a problem until you came along,” Reno said with a shrug. “He didn’t seem to hate it quite like he does now.”

“Or maybe,” Jake said before I could respond to the baseless, insulting, and completely accurate accusation, “it’s more that Big Boss *likes* it a lot more than he did before. Maybe you have something to do with it?”

“No,” I spat out, but even I caught my hesitation, and I heard the alarm in my protest. From the look of

delight on Jake's face and the look of horror on Reno's, they'd heard it too.

"Aww," Reno groaned. "Now it is ruined."

"I'm guessin' that if Doc here is the one callin' him that," Jake said with a grin, "then I'm gonna say that *something* is probably ruined."

"Ew!" Reno protested, giving Jake a shove.

"Seriously?" I asked with a groan, covering my face. "Don't you have shit to… Cait, stop laughing! It wasn't that funny."

"Oh, it was hilarious," she chuckled as she got up from her desk, grabbing a phone, punching a button, and pressing it to her ear. "Maverick, you know the drill by now. Uh-huh, just don't let Carter…I don't want to hear it, just behave, both of you."

"Handing over the reins?" Reno wondered, apparently eager to change the subject, something I was eternally grateful for. As comfortable as I was with my sex life, and as little shame as I felt about it, I did not need them to think *too much* about Xander's personal life and mine. Partly for my sanity, because I knew how bad a group of guys could be when they were on a roll giving someone shit, but also because… well, Xander was open about us amongst the guys, but I didn't think he was ever going to be open enough to let them talk or ask about our sex life without wanting to commit a felony.

"Yes," she said. "Jake, you're clearly not busy. Meet me at the truck in about twenty minutes."

Jake blinked. “Not gonna argue with ya, Cait, but, uh…why?”

“You might feel safe prying into other people’s business, but ask yourself how much you value that handsome, if clunky, face before you pry into mine,” she said as she effortlessly moved between the three of us. “Twenty minutes!”

Jake rubbed his face. “Clunky? Is my face clunky?”

I couldn’t help but chuckle at the unusual display of discomfort and self-consciousness. “I don’t think anyone is going to describe *anything* about you as dainty or graceful, Jake.”

“I don’t think it’s clunky,” Reno said, looking up at Jake with a frown.

My brow rose when Jake’s hand dropped from his face and he grinned widely at Reno. “You always got my back, thanks!”

Reno glanced at me, and I got the impression he’d accidentally forgotten I was there. Or at least, that’s what the surprised and guilty look on his face said before he turned away and cleared his throat. I didn’t know why, but it made me think of the first time I’d met him, and he’d been watching porn, thinking he had the building to himself. That was a mistake, because even during the quiet times at the outpost, you could usually count on someone showing up without warning. He had never explained, and I was tempted to ask him about it.

"But I should probably get movin'. I was just takin' a break, but I got the feeling that whatever Cait wants from me might take time. So I should get movin'. You two behave."

With that, Jake was gone, leaving me to watch his retreating back with a snort. "He says as if he isn't one of the main culprits when bullshit happens around here. Followed by *his* second in command."

Reno frowned. "Hey, I didn't do anything! I just get… caught up."

"Uh-huh," I said, then cocked my head when I heard another of the outer doors open, followed by the heaviest footsteps known to man. For some guys, that sound was an omen of disaster, a warning of imminent pain, a herald of misery…but it made me smile.

"Gross," Reno chuckled, but I didn't miss the twinkle in his eyes. There wasn't one person at the outpost who had even the slightest complaint about Xander's and my relationship, even if his being our, and by extension *my*, boss made the ethics slightly dubious. I figured it was because they trusted Xander enough to believe he would never abuse his position or allow any sort of favoritism, and trusted me to a certain extent as well. Then again, there had been a few comments, out of Xander's earshot of course, that ever since he'd started 'getting laid', he was more tolerable to be around.

Xander came around the corner and I felt a flutter in my chest…and a twitch in my groin. He was in a pair of jeans and his heavy-ass boots, but he had changed

out of his usual loose-fitting shirt, a fashion choice I openly despised since it concealed how good his body was. In its place was the rare appearance of a muscle shirt, smeared with dirt and flecks of what appeared to be wood. More important, as far as I was concerned, was the damp soaking the shirt, from what I now realized was a heavy sweat worked up chopping logs outside.

"Hey there, Big Boss," Reno said lightly. "Working hard or hardly working?"

Xander scowled. "Not hard to figure out which one of those you're up to at the moment."

Reno blinked. "What? I'm done with my shit for the day. I'm not even on call tonight."

Xander knew that, though I wasn't sure if Reno knew that Xander knew. I loved Xander to pieces, but the man could be insufferable in how little he communicated. It was a miracle these men trusted him as completely as they did, considering how much he kept close to his chest. I knew for a fact that Xander memorized the schedule for the week so he knew which of his guys were putting their lives on the line and which were relatively safe.

That was the same man who knew Carter had a deadly shellfish allergy, and Aidan had a nut allergy, even though he grumbled and grumped about the 'useless' social media aide hanging around.

"Hey there, Grumpy Gus," I said softly, smirking when he straightened slightly and one of the irritation

lines on his forehead eased. He'd been gone the past few days, dealing with administrative work, if all the bitching and moaning he'd been doing was anything to go by. "Feel good to be outside and not stuck inside all day?"

"Yes," he grunted, eyeing Reno warily. "Give me wood to chop over pencil-pushing, rule-lawyering, number-crunching assholes any day."

"I could make a joke about giving you wood, but there are sensitive ears around," I said with a glance at Reno, who sighed and shook his head.

"Please don't drag me into whatever the hell is going on in that head of yours," Reno said, waving his hands vaguely in front of him. "I don't want to be on his shit list more than I already am for existing."

The line on Xander's forehead had come back, and I tried not to laugh. It was hard to take his bad moods seriously when most of the time they were used to conceal his affection for people. Not that he was probably feeling all that affectionate for Reno at the moment. His arms crossed over his chest, and I immediately turned into a fluttery idiot at the sight of thick arms corded with muscle, smeared with a layer of dirt and sawdust.

I wasn't normally the type to drool over someone. Undress them with my eyes, eye-fuck them, yes, but with subtlety. Right now I felt I had all the subtlety of a thrown brick. Admittedly, it had been a few days since I felt like we could have a conversation that didn't

involve him bitching about the job, including a couple of nights where he'd stayed off-site at a hotel. Which meant a few days of no meaningful contact, and we'd also been busy the couple of days before that…too busy to find the energy to fuck.

And since I followed the general rule of not jerking off when I was in a relationship, that meant it had been damn near a week since I got off. That would explain why I was feeling like a horny teenager. Which would be small comfort for Reno, who was wrinkling his nose as he looked at me, clearly having some idea of what was going on in my head.

"What?" I asked him, knowing full well there was no way in hell he was going to answer me honestly. Jake? Now he'd do it in a heartbeat, laughing his ass off when he pissed Xander off, but Reno by himself? Nah, he wasn't going to take the bait, even if I was waving it under his nose.

"Nothing," he muttered. "Gross."

"What was that?" Xander asked, and I couldn't tell if he was helping me fuck with Reno on purpose or genuinely wanted to know what he said.

"Nothing," Reno repeated, speaking louder this time. "So, I'm going to get a beer. Boss, you look like you could use one."

"Sure could," Xander grunted, looking appeased for the moment. Though if the thoughts darting around my head were any indication, he was going to be more than just appeased soon.

“Got it,” Reno said and disappeared. It wouldn’t take him long to get the beer, but I figured he was probably going to take his sweet time. Or at least, I hoped that was the case.

Before I could say or do anything, Xander gave an annoyed grunt and grabbed the bottom of his shirt, bringing it up to wipe the sweat from his forehead. That, of course, meant that I, already struggling with self-control, was treated to the sight of his extremely attractive, if somewhat damp, stomach. Some flecks of wood and dirt were stuck in the dark hair that covered it, and I reached out before I could stop myself.

He froze as my fingers pressed against his skin, his nose wrinkling, clearly wondering what the hell was wrong with me, touching him while he was all sweaty. I answered by sliding my fingers down and pushing them into the waistband of his pants and underwear. It wasn’t difficult to find the base of his cock, and I slid my fingers back and forth along the warm skin.

“The fuck?” he demanded crossly at my boldness… but I noticed he didn’t stop me. I had never tried to find out what Xander’s limit for going without an orgasm was, but from the absence of his normal caution around other people, I’d guess we’d reached it.

“Fuck is one of the words on my mind,” I said in a low voice that wouldn’t carry. Which was fine because Reno was making more noise than necessary as he thumped around in the kitchen, doing a lot more than

opening a few beers. “Wanna guess some of the other ones?”

“Behave,” he warned, but I wasn’t buying the tough-guy act. He knew damn well he could stop me if he wanted, but that would take more than his normal grumpiness showing up halfheartedly, especially when I could feel him stiffen under my touch. “And…I’m gross.”

My mind drifted to the shower down the hallway, and I grinned. “True, I guess we should deal with that.”

Grumbling, he took a step away, clearly mistaking my words as a sign that I was backing off. He couldn’t have been more right…and more wrong. All I needed for my delightful, totally not impulsive and terrible idea was to get rid of the last problem in the building.

“Figured you were hungry too,” Reno said as I followed Xander into the room, where two beers sat on the counter beside a plate with a sandwich.

“I don’t do bribes,” Xander grumbled, but he snatched the sandwich and started chewing through it as if Reno or I were in danger of taking it from him. The beer was treated with much more dignity as he took a sip.

“Good thing I’m not the bribing type,” Reno said casually, but for once, he wasn’t watching Xander, but me. I raised a brow as I grabbed one of the beers and took a deep drink. There was a thump from outside, and he straightened. “You know, I should probably go with Jake and Cait in case one of them needs help.”

“Help with what?” Xander grunted.

“Cait enlisted Jake’s help in getting her into town for something personal,” I said with a shrug. “She didn’t offer more than that.”

Reno glanced at Xander. “Might you know?”

“Might,” he grunted. “But I’m not fucking telling you.”

“Fine,” Reno said with a long-suffering sigh that made me roll my eyes at the sheer drama. “I’m getting out of here.”

It was amusing to watch him practically scamper out as though I was a moment away from ripping Xander’s clothes and mine off. I supposed he wasn’t too far off the mark; it was certainly tempting, but I wasn’t going to do it with an audience, for God’s sakes.

Xander waited until he heard the door close before grunting, “She’s got a guy.”

“A guy? Cait?”

“Yep. They meet up on days off. They spend time together; she comes back the next day or at the end of the weekend.”

“Oh, so it’s like—”

“I know what it is,” he interrupted grumpily and… quickly. “I don’t need you saying it out loud.”

“You’re so fucking cute sometimes,” I said with a laugh, bending down to press a kiss to his temple.

His hand stopped halfway to his beer, and I saw color creeping up his neck toward his face. “What the fuck are you doing? Weirdo.”

"What? I'm not allowed to be affectionate?" I asked teasingly, giving him a little bump. "It's almost like I like you."

"Which puts you at the top of the list of people with the most problems," he grumbled, but again, I wasn't fooled. I knew full well he was trying to deflect from the 'awkwardness' of someone showing him affection. He was normally too prickly for something like that, but I wasn't the average person. It didn't help that his last relationship had been devoid of any genuine warmth for God knew how long, so he wasn't used to it either.

"Probably," I said, wrapping my arms around his middle, shoving my hands under his shirt. "But I made peace with the fact that I'm not right in the head a long time ago. Speaking of head…"

"I'm covered in sweat, dirt, pieces of wood," he muttered as he took a drink of his beer. "I'm gross. I stink."

I took a deep breath. "You don't stink."

"I'm covered in sweat."

"You said that."

"So I stink."

"Right now you smell…intense, but not bad. You smell like…the forest, and you. A lot of you. Which makes sense; there's a whole lot of you to begin with."

"Jesus Christ."

I chuckled, draining my beer. "I wasn't trying to be dirty that time. I mean, yeah, you're big in *every* sense

of the word. Not just your dick, though. Or your body. Big personality, too."

"Someone's being charming," he muttered as I peeled myself off him. "Maybe wait until I've had a shower before you get horny."

"Oh, I'm already horny," I said, sliding a hand down his thigh and gripping it with a smirk. "And so are you."

"Quit," he muttered, but again, his heart wasn't in it.

"So, we just got rid of Cait, Reno, and Jake for a while," I said. "Maverick is set up to take over for Cait, so you know Carter isn't going anywhere."

He paused. "Uh, okay. I figured?"

"And while Aidan and Mika are still being weird, they're hanging out while Mika goes around and takes his readings," I said lightly, taking a step back.

He followed me with his eyes. "There a point to you giving me roll call?"

"We have the building to ourselves," I said, kicking my boots aside and bending down to peel my socks off. "And you know…I could use a shower too. Good thing I figured I might end up showering here today, considering I've been left to my own devices the past couple of days."

"You're gonna shower here?" he asked, and I smiled at his disappointment. God, he was a smart man, but he could be so dense sometimes.

"I don't have to do it alone," I said, dropping my boots in the hallway so they wouldn't stink up the eating area. I waited until understanding flashed over

his face, and with a smirk, I walked down the hallway, grabbing the bag I'd left in Cait's office, and made my way to the locker room.

I knew he was fighting himself as he sat there, beer in hand. I undressed and grabbed a towel from the rack at the back, imagining him tossing temptation back and forth in his head. On the one hand, it was probably the greatest opportunity we'd have in a while. On the other hand, it was one hell of a risk that someone might still wander into the main building…especially when it was where most of the guys slept and hung out in their free time.

The shower came on with a hiss. I set the bag down, checked to make sure I had what I needed, and once that was done, I stepped under the spray. I turned on the one next to it as well, because I was pretty sure that for all his caution and worry, Xander wasn't going to resist what I was offering.

It was, after all, the place where we'd first been introduced. Not in the way either of us would have chosen, that was for sure, and yet…that was exactly why we ended up where we were. If I hadn't been so worked up and desperate for a quick release, I wouldn't have been jerking off when he came into the shower to bark at me to get moving or whatever it was he was doing. He wouldn't have caught me, and it wouldn't have planted an idea that was as foreign as it could get for a man who had been straight until that point.

The thought, along with the mood I had built up earlier, had my hand traveling down to wrap around my cock, which had already swollen to its full length. It wasn't nearly as impressive as Xander's, but when had that ever mattered to me? Or to him, for that matter. He'd had to get over the hurdle of being with a man for the first time, and now? Now he seemed to be as in love with my cock as I was with his.

"Jesus," a deep, rumbling voice muttered, and my eyes flashed open to find Xander standing in the doorway. In that moment, the past overlaid the present, and it was like that first day all over again. Except instead of being horrified and, as I knew now, absurdly turned on, he was just plain turned on…well, and a bit over my shit, but that was par for the course with us.

I met his eyes with a smirk, breaking away from the past by continuing to stroke myself as I stared at him. "You've made me cry that out a few times. Care to do it again?"

"This is stupid, you're an idiot," he insisted, his eyes locked on me. Except I could see the front of his jeans, and that denim wasn't strong enough to conceal the evidence of his arousal.

"Then do like you did weeks ago," I teased, slowing down before I came, "and walk away. Or…get those fucking clothes off and join me like you wanted to back then, before you realized what you wanted."

"Fuck off," he growled as he disappeared.

Which might have made me wonder if he was actually going to leave me standing there with my dick in my hand…except I could hear him thumping around in the locker room. He had never been good at keeping quiet, not that he had ever tried all that hard. Well, and I had seen the look on his face. No matter how much he swore up and down it was a bad idea and called me an idiot, his brain cells were just as horny as mine, which meant just as stupid.

He came back completely naked and, somehow, a fresh surge of arousal rolled through me. Then again, with Xander, I had often been surprised at how much he could turn me on, even when I thought I had reached my peak; there always seemed to be something a little higher. I stared at him as he approached me…no, marched toward me.

It felt almost…artistic, the way his muscles shifted under his skin, the way the hair on his chest and stomach glimmered in the light from the spray as he neared the showerhead. The dirt was sluiced off his skin with a clarity that was satisfying and arousing. His hand gripped the back of my head as he kissed me, yanking me in, and I groaned as I felt him press against me.

God. In every sense of the word, he was hard. His chest, his stomach, the grip he had on me, his cock.

"Missed you," I whispered against his lips, and I reveled in the way he shivered, the way he pressed tighter against me with a growl.

His cock almost demanded my attention, but I grabbed the body wash instead, not caring about anything else. It gave me the chance to rub him down, to feel the way his muscles moved under my fingertips…and it let me drop to my knees.

My eyes snapped up to his as I wrapped my fingers around the base of his cock and guided the head to my mouth, sucking him down. He swore, his voice a low growl that rumbled through me as I took him into my throat. I held his gaze and moaned as his hips twitched and I felt the thickness of his cock opening the rest of my throat. His hands caressed the back of my neck, fingers tightening as I felt his hips press against my nose, drawing out a groan I knew he felt to the depth of his core.

He pulled free, and I grunted, hooking my hand around his hip and yanking myself up as I kissed him fiercely. It was probably sheer luck that I heard the faint noise of something that had nothing to do with what Xander and I were doing. Whatever it was, my eyes opened, and I spotted a pale face, wide eyes, and a look that was impossible to translate given my current state, and then Reno was gone.

Clearly he hadn't left with Jake and Cait, but I'd bet he was leaving the building now.

Not that Xander needed to know that.

"Fuck," he breathed against my lips, clearly none the wiser about our accidental voyeur, and I wasn't going to alert him either. Of course, if I had been thinking

about…well, if I had been thinking, I might have been distracted. But even if I was, I would have forgotten as his slick fingers, two of them, pushed inside me. Water was enough for two fingers, two thick fingers, and I still felt an ache, but I gasped against his lips and ground my hips against his cock. “Fuck!”

“You can,” I informed him as I felt pleasure amongst the burn.

“What?” he asked in a voice so low and rumbling that I wouldn’t be blamed for taking it as a threat. It probably was a threat, but the best kind.

I pulled away, not so far that his fingers were forced to leave me. In fact, I could turn in a way that presented my ass to him, his fingers pushing in a little more, as I grabbed the bottle I was looking for out of the shower bag. I held it up, and for a moment, I knew he was confused. An encyclopedic range of sexual knowledge wasn’t his thing, but I’d told him enough in the past that I trusted he would make the connection as I tapped my finger on the label, pointing out that it was a synthetic lube, not water-based.

His eyes widened, and I knew then, slapping the bottle into his hand, that he had realized he could fuck me. In fact, I was so revved up and ready to go, he could shove himself deep from the first thrust and I would suck it up and burn through the pain to accept the pleasure.

That wasn’t his style, though. Even when he was riled up and ready to push inside me.

Which was exactly what he did. His cock worked deeper, and I found it harder to stay on my feet as his dick filled me. I groaned, leaning forward and placing my hands against the walls of the shower. His grip never eased, keeping me upright as his hips pressed against my ass.

It burned, it ached, but even that wasn't enough to keep me from pleading for him not to stop. I might be his only experience with men, but apparently that was enough. His first thrusts were shallow and slow, testing to see what he could get away with as he fucked into me.

There was a moment when I thought I might lose my mind if he didn't hurry up and start fucking me. Except before the thought could sink in and take root, his hips snapped, and I felt the entire bulk and weight of his cock thrust up into me in one fell swoop. I cried out before his hand slapped over my mouth, and I knew then what I was in for…a brutal, unforgiving reenactment of the fantasy that had built up in his head from the moment he had seen me jerking off in the shower.

And he did not disappoint.

I cried out against his hand, the sound still loud enough to echo along the tiles of the room, as he fucked me with abandon. There was no way either of us could 'survive' the brutal, demanding pace for long, but that didn't matter to me. Nor did it seem to matter to

him as he held my hips, angling himself in a way that made me dizzy.

His breathing was sharp, heavy, and thick. I knew what it meant, and I felt a rush of anticipation pass through me before dipping down and burrowing into my guts. I groaned against his hand, feeling the thick, blunt force of his cock inside me, and came. I pressed my face against the wall as my body wound up and pleasure slammed through me.

"Oh, *fuck*," I heard and *felt* Xander gasp, his hips stuttering against my ass as he came. He shoved inside and I could feel the thick edges of his cock throb. His teeth sank into my skin and I cried out, feeling the pain, feeling the pleasure, feeling the indescribable sensation of him coming deep inside me.

When it was done, when *we* were done, I was left sagging against the wall, pinned as Xander slumped against my back. God bless him, he eased back, letting his half-hard cock pop free with a sound I'd swear I heard even over the shower. There was none of that lingering warmth of his cum leaking out of me, perhaps because the shower was blasting hot water, or perhaps because he had been so deep when he came I would taste it sooner than leak it.

Either way, I turned to grab him with a shaky laugh, wrapping my arms around his neck and pulling him down into a kiss. He was pliant and gentle, almost tentative as he kissed me back.

"Hey," he began, but I snorted, shaking my head.

"I'm fucking *golden*," I told him quickly before he got any stupid thoughts in his head. "Cloud nine."

"Good," he grunted, trying for uninterested but sounding relieved.

'I love you' was right on the tip of my tongue, but… we weren't there yet.

We *were*. I knew I loved him, and I was pretty damn sure he loved me, but…well, when you had someone like Xander, you had to be smart. You had to play it carefully, so you didn't set off the terrified beast, which lashed out viciously at threats. Someone who—

"I'm going to say it," he whispered in my ear as he drew me back under the spray of warm water. "One day, I'm going to say it. And I'm going to mean it, but… I'm going to say it when I'm completely sober and I haven't just fucked us both into stupidity."

It.

I knew what he meant, and he knew I knew.

And it was as if he had known what was going on in my head, even though he had no business knowing it. Yet that was exactly what I expected out of him…the unexpected. Even that rare moment of raw clarity, when he understood what was hanging between the two of us, what had been building up, then acknowledged it and kept it at a 'safe' distance for the moment…such 'him' things to do.

"Same," I told him rather than call him out, catching the relief and equal disappointment on his face as he

saw I had seen him, but also…well, we were what we were.

I knew we were already on the path to being in love with each other, and he saw it too. He knew I was the first one to call it that, even as he knew he was on that path as well, but he needed the time to deal with those feelings again. And we both knew I would be willing and able to wait, but we also knew he was going to beat himself up over putting off acknowledging how we both felt. And he knew I would give him shit if he said those things aloud, and he would sooner die than say it, not because I'd give him shit, but because he was already giving himself enough shit to fill a lifetime.

Ah, the things we said and the things we didn't, the unconscious way we—

"Stop," he muttered, pulling me close and wrapping me up in a hug that had his face pushed into my neck.

Right. Follow my advice. Be in the moment; be present.

Don't think.

Just be.

"Yeah," I said, taking a deep breath, just…letting myself be.

BEFORE YOU GO

Author's Notes

Well, there it is. The shower scene that kept getting teased but wasn't delivered in the book.

A blink, and you might miss it moment where someone else catches sight of what they're up to and, wisely, gets outta Dodge. It's a little thing, I know, but hey, it's a glimpse behind the curtain.

And God knows what other peeks I'll give in the future. There's always going to be something going on in this brain of mine. Maybe I'll throw it out for you to see; maybe not.

Okay, there's going to be something, let's be honest. So I guess...wait till the next bonus material comes.

In the meantime, enjoy and let me know what you think.

Until next time,

Romeo Alexander ;)

Thanks for reading! If you enjoyed Storm, a quick review on Amazon helps other readers find it.
Leave a review · romeoalexander.com