

The Room



The Fullerton
Chronicles
Book One

By

Brian C. Copper

This is a work of fiction.
The characters contained within
do not practice safe sex.
The author does.
So should you.

* * * *

*Thanks to all the friends I've made along the way, both virtual and real world.
Your kind words and encouragement never go unnoticed.*

* * * *

Special Thanks....

Bix, your stories woke something in me and sent me down this path.

Cliffy, your friendship reminds me every day what is really important.

Monkey, your unwavering support in all my endeavors is humbling.

--Brian.

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Arrival Of The Snowman	4
Things That Go Bump In The Night	9
How To Make A Cop-sicle	13
The Big Box	17

Arrival Of The Snowman

02/23/2015

I remember our first meeting vividly. I've replayed it in my mind so many times over the years, like an old movie that gets my finger to stop clicking the remote button once it appears on the screen.

Outside the weather was anything but calm. Nature was whipping around in some choreographed lunacy that beat at the trees, causing them to sway to and fro. It was the third day of what the weather reports had stated would continue for at least another five days. I was standing by the bay window in my robe, watching the storm in all its wintery glory, when I saw a set of headlights trying to poke through the onslaught of snow and wind as they made their way down my driveway.

On a clear day the road was not visible from my window, nor was the house visible to cars passing by. Amidst some 40 acres surrounding me, there was just over 2,600 feet of dense trees and a winding path that stood between my front door and the roadway.

The headlights inched closer. The plowman had been here just two hours prior but already the snow was reclaiming its territory. I was finally able to see some distinguishing marks on the approaching vehicle just before the police cruiser came to a stop close to the front walkway.

I walked over to the front door in anticipation of the approaching officer's knock and invited him in. "Good evening, Sir," the officer said, as I closed the door behind him. "I'm out checking on folks to make sure everyone is okay. Much of the town is without power, but I can see your generator is working just fine here."

"It is, thank you," I said. "With isolation and privacy comes the need to be prepared. Especially in this area. Can I offer you some hot cocoa?"

"Thank you, but that won't be necessary. You're my last stop before heading home after a long shift to start my vacation," he said. "Everything looks good here, so I should really get going before the roads get worse."

"Thank you for checking on me, Officer Braun. I appreciate your efforts," I said, as he started to turn, adding, "Stay safe out there."

He had the slightest bit of hesitation when I mentioned his name, but continued on his way. "You as well, Sir," he said, as he stepped back out into winter's fury.

I secured the door behind him, went back to the bay window, and offered a wave as he drove off into the elements. When the lights were out of view, I walked over to my office. The computer said there were several new emails, but I was more concerned with watching the big flat screen monitor mounted on the wall.

Being this far out in the wilderness offered other concerns besides power failures, but most of those were put to rest by the array of security cameras positioned around my property. From what they were now showing, my recent visitor had not quite made a departure. It appeared that sometime after his arrival a sizable tree had fallen across both lanes of the driveway nearly 200 yards from the street, blocking the path. It also

appeared that the police cruiser was not only stuck from moving forward, it was stuck from moving backwards as well. I watched as the vehicle's lights did that familiar pattern of brake, reverse, brake, drive, repeat. Despite a valiant effort on the part of the officer, it was proving to be an exercise in futility. Eventually the car stopped trying and sat still while the weather built a gentle cocoon around it.

The police scanner over on the file cabinet was mostly quiet, as it had been much of the day, despite the goings on with the storm. A few reports of stranded cars here and there, updates on more power outages, downed wires and several fallen trees around town. I listened to hear if my visitor had signaled his distress.

Nothing.

Perhaps he had called it in over his cellphone ? That seemed to be a more common thing these days, as discretion was sometimes needed in the exchange of information over the airwaves.

Time to take action. I ventured upstairs to put on some clothes, then back down again to gather my boots and snowshoes, two pairs, just in case. Another quick look at the cameras and I could barely make out where the cruiser was positioned, even though I knew where it should be on the screen. The lights were now off and winter was quickly surrounding it like a pack of hungry dogs.

As I was heading back to finish suiting up, there was a bang on the front door. Quickly, I opened it and ushered in a veritable snowman, just as quickly sealing out the winter beast trying to get in behind him. "Is that cocoa still available ?" he asked, as I helped him remove his outer jacket. He dropped the duffle bag he had slung over his shoulder. It fell at his feet with a dull thud and jangle of metal strap loops.

"Indeed it is. But first, let's get you out of these cold wet clothes. Pile them up on the bench there and I'll get you a robe," I said, then hurried upstairs, grabbing a pair of slippers while I was there as well.

When I'd returned, he was completely naked, his back facing me, while he removed some items from his pockets. The first thing I noticed was the pattern of hair on his shoulder blades, which made it appear as though he had wings. His collection of clothing was hanging on the wall hooks, dripping onto the tiled floor beneath. His uniform, also wet despite the outer layers, was piled neatly on the bench and seemed to have soaked through to the bone. Next to those were his work utility belt and firearm.

I paused for a moment to allow the image to sink in, then approached and said, "Here's the robe. Let's get you that cocoa. I'll put your wet uniform in the dryer. The laundry room is just over here."

"Thank you," he said, while slipping on the robe, securing the front with the sash.

"A perfect fit," I joked, savoring the brief glimpse of his muscular furry chest before most of it disappeared inside the engulfing cloth. His upper chest hair still visible as it poked out of the v-shaped opening at the top of the robe. "Follow me," I said, leading the way. "This will just take a moment," I stated, walking into the laundry room to put his clothes in the dryer. I turned the dial to a medium setting, knowing they would fare better that way and be dry soon enough. Then we headed into the kitchen.

I grabbed a fresh mug from the cabinet, filled it, then handed it to him. He wrapped his chilled hands around it, savoring the warmth. "Can I get you anything ?" I asked as I refilled my own mug. "From the looks of that tree blocking my driveway, we appear to be stranded here for a while. May as well make the most of it."

“Would it be possible to use your phone ?” he asked, giving me a repeat of the slightly inquisitive look he’d had earlier when I called him by name. “My car radio has been acting up all day and somehow I managed to let my cellphone battery run out. Guess I was hoping to make it back home before that happened.”

“Sure thing. Right this way,” I said and motioned for him to follow me to the office. I picked up my cell from the desk, found the police station number in my contacts, hit the call button and handed him the phone. He didn’t notice at first, as he was busy looking at the security camera monitor mounted to the office wall. He turned when I said, “It’s ringing.”

“Thank you,” he replied, as he took the phone and held it to his ear. After a moment the other end picked up. “Hey, Jack, this is Max. I’m stuck over on Cyprus Ave, car radio went down again as did my cell. Just wanted to check in and let everyone know I’m okay but not at home,” he explained, then after a moment, “Yeah, the cruiser is blocked in by a downed tree over at the Harmon residence. No, I’m good. Mr. Harmon is here playing the role of good samaritan, but it looks like my vacation plans hit a snag,” he continued, smiling slightly. Another pause. I watched as his expression changed for just a flash of a moment, then settled again. “Okay, Jack. Keep me posted. My cell will be back in action shortly if you need to call me,” he said, then after another brief pause added, “You too, Jack.”

“Thank you,” he said, as he handed the phone back to me. I placed it back down on the desk.

“Is everything alright ?” I asked. “You looked just a little concerned for a moment there during your conversation.”

“Well, it seems the roads are worse off than your driveway,” he began, adding, “Jack said they declared a state of emergency due to the storm shifting and all the plows are off the roads for the night. Most likely tomorrow as well, if there’s no break in this weather,” he concluded.

“In that case, let me officially welcome you to my home,” I said, trying to ease the slight bit of unrest that had crept into his expression during the phone call. “It’s probably not as nice as wherever you were planning to go on your getaway, but the genny has enough fuel to keep us safe and warm far longer than we’ll ever need. The fridge and pantry are always fully stocked this time of year, so no worries there,” I explained, adding, “and there are three guest bedrooms available. I’m certain at least one will be to your liking.”

“Thank you, Sir,” he began, “what I could really use is a nice hot shower.”

“Sure thing, but please, call me David.”

“Thank you, David. I’m Maxwell. My friends call me Max.” he said, extending his hand.

“A pleasure to meet you, Max,” I said, gripping his firm handshake. “Follow me and you can have that shower.”

We made the short journey up the stairway which reached a landing near the top, then split, finishing off with seven steps on either side heading in opposite directions. Stopped on the landing, I said, “My room is to the left there at the front of the house. There’s another bedroom beside it and two more on the right side. You are welcome to any of them,” I offered, adding, “They each have a full bath with shower, so take your pick.”

“Thank you, David. You’re very kind. I’ll use this one over on the back right so as not to disturb you,” he said, as he walked up the remaining steps and crossed over the hallway through the open door.

“Very well, but, really, it’s no bother at all, Max,” I said, stopping in the doorway while he got situated. “There should be plenty of clean towels in the linen closet and the shower should have everything you might need. I try to keep them at the ready for when guests are here,” I continued, “No worries on running out of hot water either, there’s always plenty. Your uniform should be just about dry by now, so I’ll bring it up and leave it for you on the bed,” I concluded.

“Thank you again,” he said, stepping out of the slippers.

With that, I took my leave and headed back downstairs. I heard the shower turn on as I reached the bottom of the stairs. It was followed by the buzzer on the dryer as I was approaching the laundry room.

After removing the clothes and folding them, I brought the uniform upstairs and laid it out on top of the comforter. Max had left the bedroom and bathroom doors open. Communal activity at the police locker room did much to strip away any modesty between fellow patrolmen, so this came as no surprise. There was little temptation to sneak a peak at him, though the thought of hot water streaming over his fit and hairy masculine body was very intriguing. Especially after the glimpse I’d gotten earlier in the front hallway. Still, it was always better to be offered than to take.

Back downstairs, I started preparing a nice dinner for my guest, opting for a simple salad, some reheated grilled chicken from the night before, steamed broccoli and some quinoa. Lots of flavor and protein with minimal fuss.

As I was putting the finishing touches on the plates and delivering them to the table, Max entered the kitchen/dining area. Seeing him in his uniform without the outer layers was quite a feast in itself. His muscles were accented by the contours of the shirt and pants, making his physique even more bold and striking. A tuft of fur poked out of his collar where he’d left the top button undone.

“That smells great,” he said, joining me at the table.

“What would you like to drink ?” I asked, “You name it and I probably have it.”

“Whatever you’re having is fine with me,” he said.

“You may rethink that decision once I tell you,” I said. “It’s an odd choice, but I’ve decided on root beer. There’s something about this particular combination of flavors that just works for me.”

“Make it two,” he said, with a hint of daring in his voice.

I grabbed a couple of bottles from the fridge, opened them, then handed one to Max as I sat across from him at the table. He raised his bottle and said, “Cheers.”

“Cheers,” I countered, clinking the bottle neck he had extended in my direction, adding, “Dig in.”

The meal was mostly quiet. Very little conversation between the bites. But it was a comfortable silence. No trace of awkwardness to be seen, almost as if we’d done this many times before, or perhaps he was still in ‘cautious officer’ mode. When we’d finished, I cleared the table and offered coffee or tea. He chose the latter, as did I. While the water was boiling I gave him a brief tour around the kitchen in case he got hungry later, suggesting he should make himself at home. Then we adjourned to the living room.

Outside, nature continued to dance away uninhibited, as we took seats at opposite sides of the sofa. Max broke the silence, "David, you have a wonderful home. How long have you lived here?"

"Coming up on five years now," I said. "What about yourself?" I asked.

"I've been here my whole life it seems, but really only since age 7," he stated, "so, almost 20 years now."

"That puts us close to the same age," I said. "Are you content?" I inquired.

"Mostly, yes, I think," he stated. "I've got a great job in a nice community. I really enjoy helping people. How about you?" he asked, opting for the slight deflection before venturing too far into personal territory.

"Content? I am," I offered. "I have privacy when needed, the bustle of a small town when the urge to mingle with others gets too strong, and I have my work which usually keeps me busy."

"What do you do, if I may be so bold?" he inquired.

"I'm an artist of sorts," I said, letting the ambiguity hang in the air for a moment, giving him the option to nibble or move onward.

"You must be good at what you do to enjoy all this," he said, looking around him.

"It's a subjective thing, but people seem to appreciate my talents," I stated.

"Always nice to feel appreciated," he said, just as a big yawn snuck up on him. "Excuse me. Not sure where that came from. Guess it's been a longer day than I'd realized," he concluded.

"You've had quite an adventure," I replied. "Don't feel obligated to stay up keeping me company if you're feeling tired. There will be plenty of time for talking tomorrow," I added. "Neither one of us is going anywhere any time soon."

"You've got a good point there," he said, as he got up.

"Leave the cup. I'll take care of it when I finish my tea," I offered.

"Thank you again, David," he said as he turned to leave. "Enjoy the rest of your evening."

"Goodnight, Max. See you in the morning."

* * * *

As I went off to bed later that night, I noticed that Max had again left his bedroom door open. I didn't bother to peek in as I could hear his relaxed breathing. Sounded like he was sleeping peacefully.

I continued on to my room, leaving the door open as well, as was always the case.

* * * *

Things That Go Bump In The Night

02/24/2015

When I woke, there was a faint scent of bacon emanating from the first floor. I casually grabbed my robe and headed downstairs, enjoying the aroma as it heightened and intermingled with other scents, each slowly revealing themselves the nearer I got to the source.

In the kitchen, Max was busy cooking up a storm. Gone was the uniform, replaced by a plain dark blue t-shirt and matching sweats. The bacon was joined by scrambled eggs, sausage, toast and hash browns, each residing on separate plates laid out across the countertop. It all smelled amazing. I just lingered in the doorway, watching this man caught in the flow of cooking. He seemed right at home for someone who, until yesterday, had never been in this house before.

He must have spotted me out of the corner of his eye, because without a pause in his actions he said, "Your timing could not have been better. There's fresh squeezed orange juice in the fridge, if you would be so kind," he said, grabbing a pair of plates from the cabinet. "I hope this is okay?" he stopped suddenly, looking at me for a moment, waiting for a reply. "I just wanted to show my gratitude for you rescuing me last night."

"No worries, Max," I said, putting him at ease. "This is a safe haven and your efforts are very much appreciated, and I did say to make yourself at home."

"Figured we'd do buffet style, since I wasn't sure what you'd want," he said, handing me a plate.

"Thank you," I replied, still adjusting to the morning. I put my plate down on the counter for a moment to grab the juice that he had made from the fridge, then proceeded to build a sampler of this wonderful looking spread my new guest had been kind enough to conjure. We both had good portions of everything. It all looked and smelled too good not to indulge. The fresh juice was a great finishing touch, just enough pulp and no seeds. The meal continued without any talking beyond the occasional 'mmmm' and 'oh, that's good'.

When it was finished and the kitchen cleaned, we adjourned to the living room with some fresh tea. Max again sat on one side of the sofa, looking out of the big bay window where nature continued a presentation of wind, snow, and more snow. I reclaimed my place on the other side, an unoccupied cushion between us.

"David, I want to thank you again. I don't want to sound like a broken record, but I am very grateful for your hospitality," he said, his sincerity very evident.

"You are quite welcome, Max" I replied. "Where was it you were heading off to on your vacation, if I might ask?"

"No plans really," he said, turning to look out the window briefly. "Just some down time to relax. Had I known all this was coming, I might have planned to get out of town."

"Maybe better that you didn't," I offered, "if they've shut everything down anyway."

“Good point,” he said, looking out the window again. Then after a few minutes, he adjusted himself on the sofa, turning to face me, pausing for just a moment to get his words right. “Last night, some time after falling asleep, I woke up and realized I’d completely forgotten to charge my cellphone,” he began. “I remembered the charger was in my duffle bag in the front hall, along with this change of clothes, so I got out of bed and ventured down to get them. I noticed your door was open and the light was out, so I figured you were sleeping,” he continued. “After getting the charger and starting to return upstairs, I heard something. I don’t know quite what it was, but my instincts kicked in and I couldn’t ignore it,” he said, pausing again.

I listened intently, wondering if this was going where I thought it was, but not giving any indication either way, merely allowing it to play out as I sipped at my tea. Wondering also if he was aware that he was speaking as though he were delivering a police report. Or perhaps he was pointing out how innocently this little middle of the night adventure had begun. Either way, I was enjoying the tale.

“The sound seemed to stop for awhile. I had almost given up on it being just a strange environment playing tricks on me or the wind outside,” he went on, “but then it happened again, and it sounded like it was coming from below me,” his eyes not faltering, his tone still steady.

A slight grin appeared behind my cup as I sipped. “Go on,” I offered, my interest bumping up a notch, my expression remaining neutral.

He paused one last time. Then, continuing to look directly at me said, “I found your playroom. Sorry. ‘A’ playroom, down in the basement.”

He waited for some reaction from me, but my demeanor didn’t even flicker. “You’ll notice, Max, that the only doors with locks around here lead to the outside of the house,” I began. “I have no secrets from my guests that have questions. I ask merely that those inquiring be prepared for the answers.”

He took a sip of tea while pondering my statement. He started to speak, hesitated, then tried again, “You mentioned that you’re an artist. May I ask what sort of art do you create ?”

“I indulge in several mediums, depending on my moods. Painting, composing, sculpture, digital drawing, to name a few,” I replied, adding, “I also deal in the art of exploration.”

“Exploration ?” he asked, with more than a twinge of curiosity in his voice.

“Yes,” I said, “some of my clients come here to explore. To find their boundaries and limitations, as it were. For most, I assist in that exploration,” allowing the words to pause there while he took in the information.

“In your, ‘the’, playroom ?” he corrected himself.

“Yes, is the short and simple answer, but it is a bit more involved than that,” I countered. “Shall I continue, or was that sufficient for your curiosity ?” I asked, taking another sip of tea.

“Please continue,” he said, already pulled in too far to stop now. He was determined to hear more and unravel this new unanticipated mystery that was presenting itself. His interest making him eager to follow me down the rabbit hole, as his inquisitiveness nudged him forward.

“Some find their limitations early, without much effort on my part,” I said. “Others venture forth into areas they never knew existed within themselves.”

“How do you go about finding these people ?” he inquired. “I mean, how do they come to find you ?”

Taking another sip of tea, I stated, “There are many channels for communicating between myself and potential clients. Some are referred from current or past clients. Others hear whispers and seek me out. Still others find me online in various chat rooms and such.” I could see the pieces moving around inside of his head. Little by little the picture was revealing itself to him as new details were added. His gaze didn’t waver, but there was no doubt of the jousting going on behind those eyes. It would be interesting to see which of his thoughts would be the victor. “Can I get you some more tea ?” I asked, getting up from the sofa. He handed the mug to me.

In the kitchen, my pace was casual. I was giving him time to take it all in and determine which path the conversation would go next, but I was already sensing where it would lead. His cautious nature was dismantling as the intrigue unfolding before him was kicking holes in his reserve.

Max seemed momentarily lost in thought when I returned with the tea so I placed the cup on the table beside him. “Thank you,” he said, more out of reflex than full awareness of my return. I left him to his thoughts. The wheels were certainly turning in there, but there was no outward clue just yet as to what might be going on. Or perhaps he was distracted by the situation brought on by the storm as well, remembering things that needed to be tended to once the path was clear and his departure could resume.

“Max,” I began, trying to offer a sense of repose, “you’ll eventually find that no subject is taboo here. I can see that you’re having a bit of an issue processing something, so I just want you to know,…”

“How does someone go about acquiring your services ?” he burst out suddenly, his voice calm, if not a bit uncertain around the edges.

“Are you inquiring for someone you know or yourself ?” I asked, seeing that he had needed to say the words before the conversation moved on to other topics and this opportunity was lost.

“Myself,” he said, his eyes not faltering.

“That’s easy, Max. It starts with one word: Please.”

He barely paused, still looking me directly in the eyes and said, “Please.” His sense of relief was nearly immediate after uttering the word. His outward expressions were new to me, but I could see the shift of calm as it coursed over him. His slight battle with apprehension successfully defeated.

“There are some ground rules we need to discuss before we can begin,” I said, my tone becoming mildly more serious. He nodded for me to continue. “First, you need to determine a safeword,” I stated. “I never indulge in play without one. That’s why it is the first rule.”

“Can it be anything ?” he asked, his tone not indicating completely whether or not he knew what I was talking about.

“Anything at all,” I replied. “But it should be something that doesn’t come up in normal conversation. I would suggest against using ‘No’, ‘Stop’ or ‘Ouch’, as that would just be confusing,” I added, trying to inject some levity into the conversation. Max smiled and nodded. “Consider it a pause button, or a stop button,” I continued.

“Whatever is taking place, at any time, stops as soon as you say the safeword. Then, one of three things happens: we pause momentarily while you determine if you wish to

continue with the session; we pause to adjust any piece of 'equipment' that might be offering discomfort; or, we stop completely." I concluded.

He was listening intently, acclimating to these new parameters of the equation.

"There is no wrong choice." I added. "It is your moment of control. It is always respected."

He nodded again in understanding, so I went on. "Next, when you've had some time to think about it, I'll want you to make a list of things that are off the table. Lines that you will not cross," I added. "I will challenge you and push at the boundaries that you define. I will also push at some that you might not have thought of, hence your need for a safeword," I said. "The better you define those areas, the greater our explorations will be."

Max was taking it all in. His focus was evident, as was the bulge starting to build in his sweatpants, though I was unsure of his awareness of it or the faint wet spot forming at the summit. "When can we begin ?" he asked, with a trace of expectation in the words.

"Just a couple more guidelines," I said. "When you are here, and we are in a session, you will give me your complete attention. Normally, when you enter my home, your cellphone is shut off, and you belong to me, but since you are already here and do not have the disconnect of the front door, we shall adjust that locational transition to the hallway outside the playroom. Is that clear ?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he stated firmly.

"Next, when the session begins, you will not speak. Even when I ask you a direct question," I continued. "Because you are a dog in training, you may only reply with barking," I said, noticing a hint of a smile on the edges of his mouth. "I shall do my best to pose questions that require yes or no answers. You shall bark once for yes, twice for no. Is that clear ?"

"Yes, Sir, I mean, woof," he corrected himself, as the slight smile returned to a more neutral expression, his attention still focused on my words.

"Good. Also, because you are a dog, and dogs do not usually wear clothes, your first task upon arrival is to remove all clothing, jewelry, and anything you were not born with. Is that clear ?"

"Woof," he intoned again, the word starting to feel more comfortable.

"Very well. Shall we begin ?" I inquired.

A hearty, "Woof," was his reply.

* * * *

How To Make A Cop-sicle

02/24/2015

I gave Max some time to prepare. He was anxious, but I was doubtful that he had fully thought this through. I suggested a thorough visit to the bathroom followed by a quick shower.

While he was tending to that, I ventured down to the room to make sure everything was ready. The beginning sessions were easy for me. More about testing patience and endurance than anything else. If a person was too quick out of the gate, they would usually tire early on. If they lacked focus, it became a chore keeping them on track. These first few sessions helped define which direction we were likely to go.

I headed back upstairs to await for Max to be finished. He came downstairs shortly after, wearing only the robe.

“Did you choose a safeword ?” I inquired, wondering, as I always did, what it might be. The range they encompassed over the years covered such vast areas. Everything from first pets, to best friend’s middle names, to tv shows, and all sorts of things in between. Each revealing something about the chooser, whether it were immediately apparent or some delicate mystery that emerged from beneath the surface layers after many sessions.

“Yes,” he said, very resolute in tone. “I’ve chosen: oracle.”

“Very good,” I said, already intrigued by his selection. “Shall we begin ?” I asked.

He removed his robe and gave a resounding, “Woof.”

“Good dog. Heel,” I said, and lead him down to the room.

By the time we’d reached the doorway I could see that he was beginning to get aroused again. When he had come down from preparing and removed the robe, his cock was flaccid, though showed signs of recent activity. He had most likely jerked off in the shower to regain some focus. Now, his cock was almost sticking straight out in front of him, inherently anxious to get to the festivities as quickly as possible. That was normal nervous excitement. I’d seen it from nearly all of my clients. Some would apologize about it, thinking somehow that they had done something wrong, or that I would be angry about it. That was never the case, but depending on the person involved and what they were here for, my reactions would usually prey on that awkward discomfort and utilize it to my advantage. For now, I was content to allow it to go unmentioned.

When we reached the room, I commanded him to “Stay” at the doorway as I walked to the center of the tiled flooring. Then I said, “Stand there,” pointing to the wall on the far side of the room opposite the entryway.

I was unsure of just how good of a look he had gotten during his late night explorations, as he had only mentioned discovering the room and had not spoken of anything specific about it, but I gathered from his immediate assessment of the surroundings that it was only a brief glimpse. Or perhaps his policeman nature was kicking in, collecting as much detail as quickly as possible.

When he was situated, I grasped his left hand, raised it, and fastened his wrist in a leather restraint that was attached to the wall six feet from the floor. Not too tightly, but secure enough that he was aware of what he was getting himself into. There was no confusing that this was a capable restraint, which he reflexively verified by testing it against his range of motion. I held up my index finger and gave him a look indicating he should wait to do anything until instructed. His ceased actions informed me that he understood the unvoiced suggestion.

I repeated the process with his right hand on the other side, lifting his arm into position and securing it in a similar manner. I nodded towards the restraints and said, "Check them. You'll not have much success getting your hands out of them until I see fit to release you." He made a few attempts to test what I'd just told him, realizing at once that I had not underestimated their ability to keep him fixed in position. They had held up nicely against other much larger and stronger opponents.

Then, without a word, I turned and crossed the room towards the doorway, pausing for a moment at the thermostat. It had been set to 80 degrees when I was down here earlier, so I adjusted it to 70 and exited, closing the door behind me.

In the hallway, I called up the timer function on my phone and set it for fifteen minutes, hitting the start button to initiate the first countdown as I made my way upstairs.

I ventured up to my office and took a seat at the desk. On the screen in front of me I called up the cameras for the playroom. I had toyed with the option of making them more discreet looking when choosing the ones that would be installed, but decided instead that it was an added element to the games that the clients be fully aware that all of their activities and movements were being closely monitored, and most likely recorded. They would be correct on both of those assumptions, but surprisingly, none had bothered to inquire about them or protest their presence. Besides acting as another layer of control over the participant, it provided a helpful tool for me, allowing me to review behaviors and monitor reactions that might have initially gone unseen during the session, or while I was in transit from the room to the office and back.

It also imparted an added measure of safety for me. There had been an incident shortly after I had setup at this location where an unstable client had penetrated my usually keen sense of character assessment and managed to convince me that he would be an obedient plaything. When the session was over, he attempted to blackmail me, saying he would notify the police that I had kidnapped him and tortured him in my 'dungeon', as he called it. While he was busy ranting on and on about this elaborate scheme of his, I had calmly taken my phone out and pulled up the section of video from the beginning of the session. When I hit the play button and held up the small screen in front of him, he saw in full living color with crystal clear audio where I explained all the details to him, asked for his safeword, and received his consent before play would begin. He quickly realized that his feeble attempts would not hold any muster with the authorities. The video of his reaction has become one of the most treasured selections in my extensive archive.

Looking now at the monitor I could see Max was just as I'd left him. Not fidgeting or testing the restraints, but staring mainly straight ahead. The wheels were turning inside, though. It always took time for that look to settle down with the newbies. It was all part of the process.

After the fifteen minutes had elapsed, I ventured back down to the room and opened the door. I didn't acknowledge Max in any way as I adjusted the temperature again, tapping the down button once for each of the ten degrees I was lowering it this time. The game was always much more effective when some elements of surprise were removed. This was just another pawn being positioned around the chessboard while his mind and body made plans to protect the king.

I closed the door behind me once more, set the timer for the next round and headed back to the office. Looking at the camera this time I noticed that his erection was now at full attention, standing strong at a ninety degree angle upwards. Seems my new pup likes the cold. That is a very handy piece of information to acquire so early on.

Still, his expression didn't falter. There was no slouching, no uncomfortable writhing, nor any outward signals of distress. From what his eyes indicated, he'd found a point somewhere ahead of him and was focused solely on that place. The rest he was attempting to filter out. I say 'attempting' because it was still early in the game. With each minute that passed, the declining temperature would chip away at his resolve and weaken those tough outer layers.

Another twenty minutes had elapsed on the timer, another visit to the playroom, another ten degrees cooler.

Back up in the office again, I zoomed in with one of the cameras to get a better look at something that appeared to be going on with my plaything. Yup, he was leaking precum. It had built up as a nice glob on the head of his dick, which was still hard as a rock, and had begun to drip downward onto the floor in front of him, collecting in a small puddle. His cock was also now throbbing rhythmically, playing out some hidden tribal proclamation with its varying movements and pulses. His balls tightened slightly beneath, as the skin pulled them closer to his body, searching for some form of relief from the oncoming frosty air. But soon enough even that wouldn't offer much comfort.

This time I waited twenty-five minutes before venturing downstairs again. It was important not to establish a recognizable pattern to my activity, as this assisted with keeping him guessing what was to follow.

I slipped on a jacket along the way down to the closed playroom door. Once inside, I held the button instead of hitting it once for each digit and dropped the temp down to 40 degrees. It would prove more effective at this junction that he not be completely aware of what the temperature was. In the beginning, he just needed to know it was getting colder. Now, it was important that he be allowed the uncertainty of just how cold it was. His mind would use that lack of information against him, most likely exaggerating what his skin was experiencing and convincing him that it was indeed much colder than the actual temperature of the room. Again, I didn't acknowledge Max in any way as I departed, knowing that I could review the video later to see if there was any change in him during the brief visits.

Back upstairs again. Watching him on the screen was nearly mesmerizing. He was starting to quiver slightly. The cold was an unrelenting beast. It didn't care what lay in its path. It just clamored indiscriminately for submission, always content with the knowledge that everyone succumbs to its prowess eventually.

His erection was still pulsing and throbbing of its own accord. All the while leaking a thin stream onto the floor, collecting as a clear pool. His eyes continued to be steady and focused, lost in a realm far in front of him.

Out of nowhere, my inner voice said, 'What do you call a frozen policeman ?' To which it answered itself, 'A Cop-sicle.'

I thought about going back down after thirty minutes, but there was still no waver in him, so instead I ventured into the kitchen to boil some water for a fresh pot of tea.

This was turning into a very interesting opening session. Most first timers began to get visibly uncomfortable shortly after the temp dropped below 60 degrees. Fewer still made it beyond the 50 degree point. A select handful had lasted twenty minutes once the temperature had reached 40 degrees, but even then there were significant indicators of their struggles to withstand the endurance test. Eventually, all of them had invoked their safeword.

The kettle was screeching for attention. I clicked off the burner and loaded my mug with the hot fluid. The tea bag did a celebration dance, twisting and spinning on the end of its string under the onslaught of steaming water that was quickly engulfing it from all sides. A distinct contrast to the activity going on in the room below.

I waited yet another thirty minutes in the office before venturing down to the playroom again. I put on my jacket and grabbed the robe for Max along the way, draping it over my shoulder. The knob was cold to the touch when I grasped it to open the door. Once inside I adjusted the thermostat back up to 70 degrees. I could see my breath as I ventured across the chilled room.

Max was shaking a bit more than when I'd last been here, but his composure was still strong. His expression revealed little to me as I began to undo the restraints, steering clear of the puddle of precum on the floor.

As I released his arms I said, "Give them a shake to help the circulation." He did as instructed, his movements slow from the mixture of cold and restricted mobility. His fingers flexing open and closed to stimulate blood flow.

After a moment, I commanded, "Clean up your mess," pointing to the floor. He began to scan the room for something to use to wipe it up, but I cut off that thought quickly by stating firmly, "Use your tongue, like a good dog."

He dropped to his hands and knees and dutifully licked the tiled area clean. When he'd thought he had done a thorough job, he looked up at me for approval.

"Good boy," I said, and handed him the robe. "I think that's enough for today, Max," using his name to signal the session was ended.

"Thank you, Sir." was his reply as he climbed inside the soft woolen garment. The comfort it provided was a welcome change from the coolness that had settled in around him. I could hear the chill in his words.

"You'd best go take another shower, Max," I said, leading him upstairs. "But start with the water cool and gradually ease into the heat. Too quickly and you'll shock your system."

"Will do," he managed to say, his arms folded in front of him as he walked, trying to get some warmth back into his cold bones, trapping in what little was building inside the robe with each passing moment.

"When you're done, we can have some lunch," I suggested. "Meet me in the kitchen."

* * * *

The Big Box

08/01/2011

Al was a friendly bear. Close cropped dirty blonde hair and hazel eyes that spent more time looking blue than green. 6' 2" and 295 pounds, but you'd never guess it by looking at him. Sure, he was solid, but his proportions were enough that most people didn't realize how large he was from a distance of more than fifteen feet. What they did notice, in no particular order: the kindness in his eyes; the soothing timbre of his voice; and a smile that made you wish he was your best friend.

He worked at one of the "big box" stores, where members bought in bulk. When he started there, he worked the loading docks, driving forklifts and coordinating new inventory arrivals. His enthusiasm and dedication helped to bring him steadily up the ranks over the course of just two years. Now, at thirty-three, he was one of five floor managers, but he was the go-to guy whenever a crisis manifested.

When I first met him, he had just started managing the checkout area. It was a rather busy day and six of the eight lanes were bustling with customers. Al was doing a magnificent job steering people to the aisles that would suit them best. This one had a full carriage; he'd send them to Katey, because she was the quickest of all the clerks on the floor today. These three people had less than five items each; they were directed to Jack, because he could tend to the most people without the need for assistance.

By the time I was ready to have my purchases rung up, the flow was moving along well, but there was still the threat of a build-up. Al, being familiar with all the roles of the business, opened one of the closed registers and signaled to me by waving his arm and saying, "I can take care of you right over here, Sir."

"Thank you, Al," I said, catching his name on the tag pinned to his shirt.

"Did you find everything you needed today, David?" he asked, meeting my eyes when he spoke, having quickly glanced at my membership card when I handed it to him.

"I did, thank you," I replied, as he scanned the larger items still in my cart with the portable barcode reader, then tending to the ones on the conveyer belt.

"Would you be needing any stamps or movie tickets today, David?" he asked, when everything was back in the carriage.

"No thank you, Al," I replied, "I think this will suffice."

"Shall I put it on the card?" he asked, flashing that wonderful smile my way, as his soothing voice sent a tingle down my spine.

"Yes, please," I said, trying to figure out what that slight touch of an accent was in his words. It didn't seem to be specific to any particular region. More of a hint of this and a touch of that. Perhaps he had moved around a lot growing up and picked up traces of each location along the way. Whatever the case may be, it was pleasant to listen to

"You're all set," he said, handing my card and receipt to me, then adding, "Have a wonderful day, David."

"You as well, Al," I said, and headed towards the exit.

When I went back the following week, Al was tending to an issue in one of the aisles near the electronics and printer supplies. I couldn't tell what had happened, but he appeared to have everything under control in short order.

I saw him a second time during that visit over at the far left rear of the building near the bakery items, where a customer was having an issue with one of the snack venders that was running a demo of pretzel bites stuffed with peanut butter. By the time I arrived the matter had been diffused and tended to.

As he was heading back to the front of the building he caught sight of me and paused, asking, "Need help finding anything, David?"

"Actually, Al, I used to buy the large hand sanitizer refills here for the longest time," I said, "but I've not seen them around at all for a couple of months."

"We've been having an issue getting those in from the manufacturer," he stated, giving me his full attention. "But I'll check with the office and see what the status on that is."

"Thank you," I replied. "I appreciate that."

"Was there anything else?" he asked, flashing that killer smile.

"Not that I can think of at the moment," I replied.

"Very well," he said, "enjoy your day." Then off he went.

On my next visit there a few weeks later, while I was pondering the differences of the two choices of paper towels they had on offer, I heard his voice approaching from behind.

"David, I'm glad I spotted you," he said. "I spoke with corporate and I'm sorry to report we won't be carrying the sanitizer refills for the foreseeable future."

"Was there a problem?" I asked, curiously.

"Not with the product," he stated, "just with the negotiations of renewing the contract to get them back on the shelves. Sorry about that."

"Thank you for looking into it, Al," I said. "I had found another source for it a while back, I just liked the convenience of getting it here when picking up other things. But I do appreciate your efforts."

"Happy to help, David," he said, then added, "I would suggest the name brand on those paper towels. Most times, our store brand is a better value, but there's a coupon for these this week that will save you six dollars, and they're basically identical in quality."

"That is very kind of you to point out," I said, opting for his suggestion, as a voice came over his walkie talkie.

"Al, you're needed at the service desk," the voice said. "Be right there," he replied into the handset, then to me, "Duty calls."

"Thank you again, Al," I stated, as he headed off. I couldn't help watching the way his ass cheeks had a subtle wiggle to them as his legs moved. His posture and stride were very masculine, but there was something about the way his hands were positioned that caught my attention. Most times, on big guys, the arms would arc out ever so slightly away from the body, but the palms would run parallel to their sides. For Al, the arc was there, but the palms angled away a bit, bending outward from his beefy wrists. I wondered if he was even aware of it.

That was a thought to ponder some other time. For now I needed to finish up shopping and get back home for a client later in the day.

As I was heading towards my vehicle, I could see Al several cars further up the row assisting an older woman with putting items into her trunk. He was just finishing as I was passing by and said, "Hey, David, need a hand with any of that ?" and followed me over to my car.

"That's very kind of you to offer, Al," I said, smiling. "I'm parked over on the far side of the lot. I like the added exercise."

"No worries," he said, smiling back, "I spend most of the day walking around, so this won't bother me a bit."

We made the rest of the brief journey listening to the carriage wheels rolling across the pavement. Al seemed to have something to say, but the words hadn't made their way to his mouth just yet. Or perhaps he was one of those, like myself, that didn't feel the need to fill in every conversational gap. We were almost at our destination, so I wasn't too concerned either way.

"I'm actually glad I caught you before you left," he said, as we arrived at my car and started to load the items into the back of my SUV.

"Why is that ?" I inquired.

"One of the guys in receiving, Jeff DiStefano, said you might be able to assist me ?" he asked plainly.

"How is Jeff these days ?" I asked, having not spoken with him in several months.

"He's doing well, new baby, grabbing overtime, you know how that goes," he said, but still not alluding to where the conversation was heading.

"How is it that you think I can assist you ?" I asked, careful not to mistake what he was asking.

"Well," he began, a bit tentatively, "Jeff said you had a certain skill set that I've been searching for." His eyes were still locked on me, but he was having just a bit of difficulty with expressing exactly what it was that was on his mind.

"I'm afraid you'll need to be a little more specific than that, Al," I said, still erring on the side of caution. "I've helped Jeff with a few things over the years."

"I don't know why I'm having such a tough time with this," he said, sounding a bit frustrated at himself for stumbling around the issue.

"Just tell me what it is you need," I offered, "and I'll let you know if it is something I can assist you with."

Then after a moment of contemplation, "I'm looking for some help setting up a website," he managed to finally say.

"Ah," I said, glad that I had waited for it. "Why, yes, that is something I could help you with. What sort of site were you hoping to build ?"

As he started to open his mouth, the portable radio on his belt chirped and said, "Al, you're needed at the service desk."

"Duty calls ?" I asked, smiling.

"Do you have a card ?" he asked, with a bit of anxiety in his voice. I was unsure if it had to do with the details of the website or his sudden need to deal with a crisis inside. "Maybe I could meet with you later and talk about the specifics ?"

I took out my wallet and handed him one of my cards. It was a plain white card with my name, address and phone number in a simple font with slightly raised lettering. I had opted for just the basics, because otherwise I'd have to keep several cards on hand for the various things people inquired about.

“How about 9 PM tomorrow night ?” I asked. “My address is on the card.”

“That would work perfectly,” he said, sounding relieved, as his radio called after him again with a greater sense of urgency.

“Very good,” I said, “ Call if you need to reschedule, otherwise, I’ll see you then.”

“Thank you, David,” he replied, shaking my hand, his normal relaxed smile returning to brighten his features. “Let me take that for you,” he said, grabbing my carriage to bring back with him, then adding, “Have a great day.”

“You as well, Al,” I said, watching that hypnotic wiggle as he travelled back towards the building.

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