

## 26. Troubled Twosomes

“Whn cn I CU?”

Sitting on his bed, Rhett sent the text message to Darlene from his new smartphone. The ‘rents had finally caved after weeks of cajoling and bought the twins touch-screen DROID phones when they found a promo sale. Rhett’s had a red case and Riley’s was purple.

“Your mom and I are assuming that as mature, almost-Seniors, you are responsible enough not to take pictures of your dicks and send them to girls,” Larry pronounced when he surrendered the goods. “If you do, somebody will post them on Facebook and then you’ll never get any dates.” Larry laughed at his own joke.

“We take after you, Dad,” Riley replied, “so that won’t be a problem.” The brothers high-fived and Larry chuckled in spite of himself.

“Be that as it may, sexting has a way of coming back to haunt you. When you get to be NFL stars, that Perry Hilton guy will post the pictures and everybody will be checking out your dicks on the internet, like Favre.”

“It’s ‘Perez,’” Riley corrected. The twins pulled faces at each other.

“It isn’t that Brett’s dick is small,” Rhett observed. “He just has big hands.”

“Yeah, and he should’ve taken the picture upward from his balls. That would make it look longer,” Riley added.

The boys cracked up and Larry groaned. “Just don’t do it,” he warned.

Riley already had torn the packaging apart and extracted his new phone. Pulling the waistband of his gym shorts away from his body, he aimed the camera into his pants and started pushing buttons.

“What did I just say?” Larry growled.

“Just kidding. Anyway, I have on underwear.”

“You’d better have.”

“Wait a minute, Dad,” Rhett interjected thoughtfully. “You were online looking at Brett Favre’s dick?”

Larry spun away and tromped out of the room before his sons could spy the beet red color rising up his neck.

“Is there something you wanted to share with us, Dad?” Riley called after him, snorting with laughter.

The sound of the kitchen door slamming was his reply.

Darlene read Rhett’s text and texted back before she could think too much about what she was doing.

“Satrdy aft? Zack @ gun shw w/ Daryl.”

Rhett grinned. “CU then,” he poked out his reply. He cut the connection and pumped one fist into the air. “Yes!”

Riley sauntered in from the boys’ en suite bathroom, naked, with one eye scrunched shut as he ground a Q-tip into his ear. “What?”

“I’m seeing Darlene on Saturday,” Rhett answered. “And *no* you can’t come,” he added as Riley’s cock twitched and started to stiffen.

“Aw, come on. I’ll play videos with Zack while you do your thing with Darlene.”

“Zack won’t be there.”

“Even better!” Riley enthused, waggling his eyebrows.

“I don’t think Darlene would go for that.”

“She likes me. She proved that on Saturday.”

“Yeah, if she thinks you’re *me*, you dick!”

Riley’s penis seemed to think it had been addressed because it stretched outward on its way toward his belly button.

Rhett knew what his brother was thinking about. “Go do something with that thing,” he grumbled, adjusting his own erection inside his sweatpants.

“I just did,” Riley admitted, turning back to the bathroom.

Rhett understood Riley’s point. He had to spank the monkey at least twice a day—usually more—to keep from walking around with a boner all the time or coming in his jeans. Thinking about Darlene made it worse.

“Part of being a teenager,” their dad had remarked several years ago when he caught them masturbating. He’d entered their old bedroom to rouse them for school and both boys had curled into roly polys on their respective twin beds and yanked up their covers defensively.

“Just try not to go blind. And clean up after yourselves,” Larry had directed, unfazed. “Your mom’s been wondering about the ‘toothpaste’ stains on your sheets. Socks work good.” Then he’d walked out of their room and shut the door.

It wasn’t long afterwards that Larry started framing in a downstairs bedroom and bathroom for the twins. He offered to build separate bedrooms, but

the boys preferred to share, so he made the room double-sized. In their attached bathroom, arranged around existing plumbing, their dad installed matching sinks and mirrors at each end of a vanity cabinet so the boys could get ready for school at the same time. He also built a tiled walk-in shower with two shower heads spaced along the wall like those in a locker room and added a separate water heater. Everybody was happy with the remodel, since adding a master bedroom suite also added value to the house.

Rhett was torn over Riley's demand. He and his brother had shared everything always—toys, treats, presents, clothes, friends. Jealousy and possessiveness were never an issue because each twin was integral to the other, like two strands of thread twisted into yarn. Growing up, their parents had conscientiously treated them as separate individuals, which they were, of course, but to them, the word “I” naturally translated to “we.”

After punching his brother that day at the picnic, Rhett had realized that sharing Darlene with Riley wasn't what bothered him—he just wanted his chance with her first. Riley had already had full-on intercourse with Haley at least twice, but Rhett hadn't quite gotten there with Jamie. He had lost interest in dating the girls after meeting Darlene and he knew Riley would feel the same way now that he'd had a taste of her. She was a woman, after all. It was fuckin' *massive!*

Neither twin felt wholly at ease when an imbalance existed between them, so they routinely—and unconsciously—measured and equalized their resources and experiences. If only one bowl's worth of their favorite cereal remained in the box, they either split it or they both ate something else. If Riley drove this time, then Rhett drove the next. They didn't have to negotiate—it was tacitly understood.

The problem was that Rhett had never told Riley of his “failure to launch” with Jamie. He wasn't sure why, whether he was respecting her privacy about being a virgin or protecting his own self-esteem, but it was too late to bring it up, even if it would make Riley back off Darlene for a while.

Regardless, he was feeling the disparity and the need to rebalance things in the sex department, and he was concerned that Darlene might be a finite resource. She had been tentative with him all along because of his age and she might be scared off altogether if they both went after her. She wasn't a sure thing and Rhett didn't want to mess things up. Later, well...that was something else. If Darlene liked him, she would like Riley too—no question about that.

“Weh, iss nah i ee ished me mak or anysing,” Stephen said, twisting around at the sink to talk to Walker who was taking a piss. Stephen had just stepped out of the

shower and wrapped a towel around his hips, his shaved torso gleaming with water droplets, his thick black hair sticking out from his head.

Walker flicked his dick, flushed the toilet, and turned. His cock began to stiffen at the sight of his lover's wet, nearly nude body. Stephen worked at looking pretty and he was more than successful at it.

"Huh?" Walker asked distractedly, staring at the edge of Stephen's towel where it cut across his hips to reveal just a tease of pubic hair. *Damn, that's sexy!*

The two had had great makeup sex, fucking several times throughout the night and napping in between. Now they both had to face work when Walker would have preferred to drag his lover's ass back to bed.

Stephen finished brushing his teeth, rinsed, and then dried his mouth with a hand towel. "I said, 'It's not like he kissed me back or anything,'" Stephen repeated, coherently this time.

"The priest?" Walker queried, jolted awake. "Are you done with him then?" Suddenly, he was on edge.

"Not if wondering makes you that hard for me!" Stephen leered at his partner's nearly upright cock.

"Slut." Walker advanced toward the little tease and snatched off his towel.

"Guilty," Stephen chirped. Rather than the grope he was expecting, Stephen felt the sharp sting of the towel on his ass as Walker stepped back and snapped him with it.

"Ow!"

"My slut," Walker amended, tossing the towel back and stepping into the shower.

As he reached for the shampoo, Walker acknowledged to himself that he had not been entirely forthcoming with Stephen about some inconsistencies in his own psyche. For one thing, amid the dark storm of his fury, he'd gotten hard as a rock when he saw Stephen and Arthur kissing, and his erection had still been there when he got into his car and peeled off. He could excuse that as an artifact of his heightened emotional state, but he knew there was more to it. The sight had angered him, yes, but it also had aroused him.

For another thing, Walker understood Stephen's attraction to Arthur. The priest was physically beautiful, intelligent, steady, and had a natural warmth and calm that drew you to him. For Stephen, the priest's collar undoubtedly held a certain forbidden appeal too. Episcopal priests take no vow of celibacy, but the dog collar sets them apart as...well...if not exactly holy, then at least more holy than thou.

If he were painfully honest, Walker would admit that he wasn't just jealous of Arthur—he was also envious of Stephen. He could see himself...*kissing that*

*fine-looking man, pulling off his priestly robes, peeling away that black clergy shirt and matching black slacks. When the priest was overcome and the man beneath was bared, he'd grasp that tall, lean body...*

The scenario appealed to Walker's cock, which was swollen to the point of discomfort. He squeezed it in his fist, sliding up and down its length.

*I am going to hell for sure,* he thought.

"Bye, stud," Stephen crooned, opening the shower door slightly and positioning his face for a kiss. "You're still horny after all that sex!" he marveled, staring at the stiff cock nestled in Walker's hand. "I'd take care of that for you, but I'm meeting Kendra to go over next Sunday's music."

Walker bent to the open margin of the door and kissed his lover. "Never mind, I've got to get going too."

"Save me some!" Stephen called on his way out of the bathroom.

"You know I will."

Walker finished his pressing business, then washed his body and rinsed his hair. Nothing like a sweaty night to remind him of what he would face when he got outside. You couldn't escape the stink of Kentucky's summer heat and humidity on your body. The joking rule-of-thumb in the South is that it's okay to smell like today's sweat, as long as you don't smell like yesterday's. Two showers a day often didn't cut it. He would get his second one at the gym after work.

Amity was too small for a gay gym, but most gay men who worked out did it at Rocco's Hardbody on Magnolia Street. Rocco was of Italian descent with the southern Mediterranean body type ideal for a bodybuilder—short torso and limbs with nowhere for the muscles to grow except outward. He had a wife, but nobody ever saw her and rumor had it that Rocco occasionally pinch-hit for the other team. Walker wouldn't know since he didn't mess around with married men.

His first weight trainer had been a power lifter, so although free weights were generally safer for the joints and considered better for building balanced muscles, Walker enjoyed the feel of that 45-lb. iron bar balanced across his body, especially for squats. Plus, when he loaded up 350 lbs. of iron and planted himself under the rack, some heavily muscled bear would invariably step over to spot him, and he would reciprocate. Walker enjoyed the physical proximity and contact with other men, though when he was in a relationship, he never acted on the advances resulting from it.

Today was his legs, shoulders, and arms day and after a little stretching, he got down to it—quads, hams, calves, followed by delts, biceps, triceps. He didn't

lift weights just to stay in shape or get a sculpted body, though he liked those benefits. He did it mostly because pushing around iron focused his mind completely, relieving stress and providing a nice endorphin buzz afterwards. Plus, the more muscle he packed on, the less he had to think about his caloric intake and he liked to both cook and eat.

Sometimes, Walker ran into former lovers at the gym, a reality of living in a small town. He was proud that he'd managed to keep all of them as friends after their breakups. Once in a while, he even saw his high school girlfriend, Tanya, when she came in to meet her husband. She'd been his one experiment with straight sex, though even as a teenager, he was pretty sure it wouldn't work out. It hadn't—they'd had sex a few times and though he'd never had trouble getting erect, due to his age as much as anything, Walker found that Tanya's body felt foreign to him. It wasn't until he met his first gay lover that he understood the real power and pleasure of sex and he'd never looked back.

On this particular day, Walker saw only casual acquaintances, which left room for his mind to wander to his calamitous encounter with Father Arthur. He needed to address the situation unless he planned on changing churches—trying to avoid the priest of the church he attended would make his life too difficult. Besides, he felt guilty and wanted to make amends. He was going to have to swallow his jealousy somehow, though, because Stephen's attraction to Arthur was unlikely to disappear anytime soon. The lure of the chase would be all the more potent for him since Arthur had rejected Stephen's kiss.

Martha was so worried about Father! How had that girl gotten a job where she could molest him every day if she wanted to? He wouldn't be able to protect himself at all! He'd have to walk past her in that crowded office constantly. She *had* to help him. He'd acted like it was nothing, but Martha had seen Joanne's sexual aggression and she couldn't let Father's denial prevent her from doing what was right.

Martha went home to bake brownies Monday morning after she discovered the brochures and found out about Joanne's new job. Eating brownies or fudge helped her think better because nuts are good for the brain. She liked to use those Betty Crocker mixes in the box, which were a lot easier than making brownies from scratch.

Mixing up her last three boxes of brownies made Martha think about her mother, Edith, who used to make homemade brownies after Gideon sold a submarine still's worth of moonshine and could afford to buy cocoa and sugar.

Martha's Momma had always said that her kids ate more sweets than were good for them, but at least they knew they were loved. That was true—Martha's Momma had loved her and Floyd, and half-a-century on, Martha still missed her. It was only as she'd gotten older herself that she realized how young her Momma had been when she died...only thirty-two years old. Martha herself was thirty years beyond that now.

It had been horrifying, the worst thing that ever happened to her. Martha was only fourteen when she woke up late one Saturday morning without being called. Usually, her Momma got her up and fed her pancakes or biscuits and gravy or grits and eggs for breakfast, but when Martha woke that day she couldn't find her. Her Daddy wasn't around either, but he always took Lloyd squirrel or opossum hunting on Saturdays, so that was no surprise.

Martha had called for Edith and, when she got no reply, went outside to look. Her Momma wasn't in the wash house or down in the root cellar. Martha knew she hadn't gone to the garden for vegetables or out to forage for wild greens since her carrying basket remained by the door. It was only after checking every other place she could think of that Martha considered going to the snake house. She wasn't allowed in there without one of her parents, though she liked to handle the snakes both at church and at home. It was something she and Floyd had been doing since they got big enough not to be mistaken for prey. Her parents mainly kept rattlesnakes because their rattling would give you enough warning to get away if they got mad. At least that's what her Daddy said.

The snakes were kept far off, past the wash house and the quarter-acre garden. If they escaped, they were likely to hide in the garden to hunt rats and mice and not be tempted to visit the house. Her Daddy had taught her to carry one of his special forked sticks whenever she went out of the yard. Martha had learned how to trap a snake's head between the forks when she was ten or eleven years old. She wasn't supposed to kill wild rattlesnakes except in an emergency because they renewed the family's breeding stock and also provided meat when there was nothing else to eat.

Martha had fetched a forked stick from the wall of the washhouse and made her way past the garden to the snake house. She didn't think she would get in trouble, because she had a good reason for going out there. Probably her Momma was feeding the snakes or separating out new babies or something and just hadn't heard Martha call. As she passed the vegetable garden and approached the old wooden shack, she saw that the snake house door was closed.

"Momma!" she called, but her mother didn't answer.

Martha raised the latch on the outside of the door. If the latch came down while you were in the snake house, you could pull on a string that ran through a hole

in the wall and release it. That kept you from accidentally locking yourself in with the snakes.

Martha pulled the handle, but the old plank door was stuck. All the doors got tight when the humidity was high, so that didn't surprise her. She tugged again, harder this time, but to no greater effect. Martha pressed her ear against the door, almost sensing the reptiles slithering around in their boxes. She heard no rattling, though, which was good since silence meant the snakes weren't agitated. In spite of that, Martha had a tickly feeling on the back of her neck and a tightness in her stomach telling her something wasn't right.

Martha had never known the snake house door to be so intransigent. She yanked and yanked at it until, finally, she thought to plant one foot on the wall beside the door for leverage. With the extra muscle strength behind her pull, the heavy door suddenly popped open, slammed into her forehead, and knocked Martha onto her butt in the dirt. It hurt bad, but she barely noticed the pain in her head because right in front of her, just inside the snake house door, lay her Momma's two legs sausaged into her favorite harvest-gold, double-knit pants. Edith's feet flopped out of the doorway and one of her sneakers fell to the ground.

What Martha saw next made her scream bloody murder as she crab-walked backwards on her hands and feet in a panicked scramble to get away.