

In the Mind Short Story
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Two (plus) years ago:

As I walk into work, I hurry for the stairs. I *could* take the elevator but taking it during this hour means that there's a high likelihood of *others* climbing into it with me, which then leads to small talk.

I don't *like* small talk.

So I take the stairs since everyone here is determined that laziness is part of the profession.

Once onto the third floor, I give a brief smile to anyone who looks my way, so they don't think I'm being rude, and hurry to my tiny office. When I reach the door to it, I realize that it's tinier than normal because a second desk has been squeezed into the room.

It takes me about fifteen seconds to realize that the second desk isn't *also* for me. Which means that when my new coworker will be seated at their desk, I'll be forced to interact with them. Hell, I'll basically have to ride their lap to get in and out of the room.

I *really* don't want to ride anyone's lap so I can get out of the room.

People automatically assume I'm stuck-up. They don't get to know me before making that assumption. They just assume that since I don't go out of my way to speak to them, I'm rude. Jokes on them. I'm just not fond of talking to them. No, that sounds... mean. I suppose it's better to state that I feel awkward when in a room where I'm forced to speak to others.

Thankfully, I am leaps and bounds better than I had been in high school. I can at least interact with people now without any of my old issues.

But if they're planning on cramming a second body into this tiny room, that means I'll be forced to socialize, and I can't shut the door and hide.

Then again, there's a huge chance the person won't like to talk. Maybe they're an older person who I could learn something from. Maybe they're serious about their job, and we'll only talk when there's something that needs to be said.

That's right, maybe I won't mind having someone in the room with me. After all, once something becomes my "normal," my reluctance toward it quickly dissipates.

I quickly back out of the room and rush over to my boss's room. I hurriedly knock on the open door until he waves me in with a smile.

"Hey, Chevy!"

"There's an extra desk in my room that needs moved," I say.

He starts laughing. "It doesn't need moved. We just put that in there last night! You should have seen us trying to figure out how to even get it in there. But I knew that if he was going to be your partner, it would be best for you guys to share an office.

Clearly, I've heard him wrong. "What?"

Keith looks confused. "We... talked about this last week. I said that you were getting a new partner and you laughed."

"I thought it was a joke. You did not go 'You're getting a new partner!' You were all, 'I can just imagine how awkward you'd be with a partner.'"

"Hmm... well... surprise! Your new partner starts today!"

I stare at him in disbelief. "Please tell me it's an old weathered cop who barely talks but smells nice?"

“He *does* smell nice, and he was a cop before!”

“I’m honestly not worried about that stuff at all, so I don’t know why I said it. But the barely talking part, please tell me that part’s right?”

His head snaps up as I hear the elevator open. “Speak of the devil, here he is!”

Because of the way the office is set up, I can’t see him until he’s halfway through the open area where the rest of the department works. My traitorous eyes are instantly drawn to him as he saunters in. The smile on his face seems permanent as he appears to be walking in slow motion, smiling and waving at each person he passes. He even starts laughing and pats some guy on the back like they’ve been friends for years. He looks like he belongs in a fashion magazine or maybe he should *play* a cop in the movies.

His clothes hug him perfectly from the way the jeans rest tightly around his hips to the way his button-up is snug enough I can just barely see the outline of muscle. His blond hair is styled back, like he spent *time* doing it and he has a beard started that looks strangely good on him. I generally can’t stand beards, but I’m strangely into this one.

“Are you going to wipe the drool off your face before you greet him or do you want me to introduce you as a K-9 unit?” Keith asks.

My attention snaps back to Keith as I turn to face him. “I’m not *drooling*. He might be... attractive, but he’s totally not my type.”

“Who’s not your type?” a voice behind me asks.

How the hell did he get here so fast? Wasn’t he just slow-mo sauntering around the office? I quickly turn around and catch the man’s eyes. “Keith,” I quickly spit out.

He looks over at Keith, who is definitely old enough to be my father. “I don’t know, he’s a pretty handsome man,” he says.

Keith laughs and might even blush a little as I die inside. “You two are going to get along *marvelously!*”

The man, who is probably around my age, gives me a huge smile. “You’re my partner, right? I’m so happy to finally meet you!” He holds his hand out, and I take it. “Seneca Bates.”

“Chevy Wright.”

“Like the car *and* the plane?”

“Yes?”

“I love that,” he says, and I realize he’s still shaking my hand, so I try to pull it away.

“I have a few things to do, so Chevy, do you think you can take Seneca around and introduce him to everyone?” Keith asks.

Clearly, he hates me.

“Of course,” I say. “Um... right this way.”

I step outside and look around for who I should introduce him to. Of course the woman sitting close to us is staring at us, and now I feel obligated to introduce Seneca to her. I walk over to her and Seneca smiles.

“This is Seneca,” I say, and at that very moment, I realize that I don’t remember her name.

There’s a moment of awkward silence where the obvious, “And Seneca, this is so and so” should go. Instead, I’m standing here like an idiot, she’s beaming like an idiot, and Seneca just looks confused and unjustly handsome.

He holds his hand out. “It’s nice to meet you, and you are?”

“Sandra.”

After that horrorfest is over with, I decide that I have properly introduced him to enough people, so I rush back to my (our) office as Seneca follows after me.

“Is that it?” he asks.

I slam the door shut and look at him. “I don’t remember any of their names,” I admit.

He grins. “Are you new too?” he asks.

“No... I’ve actually been in and out of this place for *years*. Like... since I was a kid.”

He starts laughing, and for some reason, it makes me smile. “Alright. That’s okay, I don’t mind introducing myself. I already met Tami and she’s been great.”

“Oh... uh huh.”

He raises an eyebrow. “You don’t know who Tami is, do you?”

“No, I don’t.” I look around at the small space. “So anyway... I hope you like a tight hole.”

“Loose ones generally aren’t as fun,” he says, and I gape at him in horror.

Oh. My. God. I’m going to die. “The room.”

He grins at me. “I got it.”

“Excuse me.”

I rush out, leaving him inside before racing into Keith’s room and slamming the door shut. “I would like to quit.”

He looks up at me. “Why?”

“I just asked if he liked a tight *hole*.”

Keith starts laughing.

“Will you fire me?”

“What’d he say?”

“That...” I don’t even know if I can say it. “Loose ones aren’t as fun.”

Keith starts laughing harder. “I already love him. Now get out there and come back with more embarrassing things to make me laugh!”

“I don’t even know why I consider you a friend,” I say sourly as I turn toward the door.

“Chevy.”

I hesitate and look back at Keith.

“Don’t think I haven’t noticed you... getting unhappier with everything... This is a lot for you to deal with alone, and I don’t want all of that weight just on you. I really think this could be good for you. But you have to *let* it be good for you.”

I sigh, knowing that he’s right. “I’ll try.”

“And stop talking about holes. That’s *not* the way to get your new partner to like you.”

I quickly leave the room and find Seneca standing in the middle of the cubicles with a huge crowd around him. There is *no* way I’ll be able to get along with this man.

I debate running to my office and pretending that I never heard of a “Seneca Bates,” but I decide to man up and awkwardly stand to the side, out of sight, until Seneca is done with introductions. As soon as he sees me, he heads over with a smile.

He nods at our small office. “Are you ready to penetrate the hole together?” he asks, looking into the room.

For some reason, my brain shorts out, and I start laughing. “You’re not going to let me forget that, will you?”

“Probably not, but if I’m being honest, I like how upfront you are.”

“I just... regret this entire day. I want to go home, hide on my couch, and probably find a new job.”

He's grinning at me. He has one of those grins that seems to make everyone else want to smile. So here I am, grinning like a fool for NO reason. Just... strangely charmed by him. Although, he's like a walking sex god, there's absolutely no reason why I *wouldn't* be charmed by him. But he's probably not even gay.

He steps up to the doorway and looks inside. "Is this a real office?"

"I don't think it is," I admit. "Do you have a gift, Seneca?"

"I do. I can mimic people's gifts." He reaches out and touches my arm. "Now I can mimic your gift."

"What? That easily?"

"Pretty neat, huh?" he asks with a grin. "I have literally *no* idea what to do with your gift or what it does. Since you're clearly a bit kinky, I'm leaning towards the ability to make sex slaves?"

I point at him. "Yes. I have a house *filled* with sex slaves," I say dryly.

He pokes my arm.

"What are you doing?"

"Trying to turn you into one."

"This is not... appropriate!" I say while trying to pretend I'm not slightly thrilled by the prospect of being a sex slave to this man who has charmed me out of using my *brain*.

The door opens and Keith pokes his head in. "I know there's probably not room for three of us in this tight hole, but that client I talked to you about this morning is now here."

"I would like to resign," I decide.

"I've literally never been asked for a threesome on my first day at work, but I'm starting to think I'm going to like this place," Seneca jokes.

"Good, you can have my position," I say.

Keith pats my back. "Chevy likes to pretend he hates everything, but he secretly loves all of it."

"So, a job? Good, great, let's go." I hurry off before anything else can happen to make this day any worse.

Seneca goes for the elevator, so I get in beside him. The moment the doors close, he looks at me, and I know the dreaded small talk is coming.

"Why do we get our own room and everyone else is crammed in cubicles?"

"I guess because we're part of the 'special' side of the team."

"Ooh. I like it. I can introduce you to everyone if you want since I remember their names."

I'm slightly impressed. "All of them?"

"Yep."

"How?"

He chuckles. "It's a talent."

The door opens and the woman at the front desk smiles. "Seneca!"

"Hey, Pat!"

"Since you're new in town, if you need anyone to show you around, I'd be more than happy to!"

He gives her a huge smile but waves her off. "Thanks, but Chevy already offered!"
I did?

"Who?" she asks.

"Oh sorry, last names. Detective Wright."

“Who?” she repeats

He glances at me and points. “Did I get your name wrong?” he asks.

I shake my head, not having the heart to tell him that she just doesn’t know my name.

“No. That’s my name.”

The woman politely chuckles. “Oh! Him! Haha! Well... good luck.”

We head out the door and Seneca looks at me. “Is she new?”

“No. I actually try to avoid everyone so I don’t have to talk to them.”

“Why would you do that?” he asks, eyebrows knitting.

“So... I don’t have to talk to them.”

“You don’t like talking to anyone?”

I shrug. “I’ve just... never been much of a talker, really.”

“You talk to Keith.”

“I know Keith.”

“You’d know these guys too if you talked to them.”

“Keep your optimistic social nonsense to yourself. I *like* not talking to people. Social people think it makes me upset to not socialize. I can talk to people just fine. I *prefer* not to. I like interacting with people close to me and that’s it.”

“Hmm... I’ll penetrate your social bubble some day.”

I turn right and head for the hallway while the word “penetrate” circulates in my brain. “I don’t want penetrated... no... not...” Why have I said so many ridiculous things today?

He gives me a mischievous grin. “Oh? Do you want to penetrate my bubble?”

“Not... like *that*... with *you*.”

“But with other people?”

“No! I only... I’m confused.”

“I was talking about your social bubble. You’re the one that went *there*,” he says, but he looks very content that it went there.

“I apologize. That was not professional at all. I don’t know why I said those things. I’m sorry.”

His smile seems to widen. “That’s alright. I feel like we’re just getting closer.”

“I don’t want to get closer.” I take a deep breath. “Alright. Here’s the room before I shame myself anymore,” I say as I point to it. “So... I guess I should’ve been explaining things to you as we walked instead of talking nonsense. So Keith talked to me about this man earlier. I guess he was attacked by someone when he’d been walking home. He hit his head and doesn’t seem to remember what happened, so he can’t recall who did it or how it happened.”

“Okay, so memory loss inflicted by the trauma. I get it.”

“I don’t really know how to pull you into a memory with me. I guess we should’ve tried it on Keith or someone first...”

“I like to wing it.”

“Okay. We’ll... ‘wing’ it and see what happens,” I say as I pull open the door and lead him inside.

The man sitting at the table smiles when he sees us. He’s an elderly man with gray hair and wrinkles around his blue eyes.

“Good morning, I am Detective Wright, and this is my partner Detective Bates,” I say as I walk up and shake his hand. He takes my hand before moving to Seneca.

“Nice to meet you. You can call me Ron. You think you’re going to be able to help?” he asks hopefully.

Seneca and I take a seat in front of him. “I’m going to try. So, this happened last night, right?”

He nods. “Yep! Some hooligan mugged me and stole my wallet and there was nothin’ I could do about it. Now... you’re gonna work magic on me, right? Will you use a wand like they do in the movies?”

“Um... no, I only have to touch your hand. Is that alright?”

“I don’t see why not! I am a bit disappointed about the wand though.”

“Are you ready then?” I ask.

He seems strangely excited about this. “Let’s work some magic!”

“I just need your hand.”

He holds it out so I take it and then look at Seneca while wondering how this is going to work.

“I think if I just touch you, I can figure it out,” he says.

I merrily leave him to it, since it’s out of my expertise.

He reaches out and takes my free hand, and I can’t help but look down at it. If worse comes to worse, I’ll go into the memory alone. I’m used to going into memories alone seeing as I’ve never met anyone who has a gift similar to mine.

I touch the man’s arm and close my eyes, but my focus strays to Seneca’s hand that’s warm in mine. This is just a job, so I don’t know why I’m letting my mind stray. I take a deep breath and plunge into the man’s memories.

When I open my eyes, I know I’m in the memory. It’s a hard feeling to describe, but it’s such a familiar one. One I used to resent. One I sometimes still resent. But what I’m more surprised about is that Seneca is here with me. His eyes are wide as he looks around.

He smiles at me. “Hey! We did it!”

“Yeah,” I say, equally shocked.

He cocks his head to the side as he looks at something past me. “Is this... how these memories usually are?” he asks.

“Yeah, this seems pretty normal...” That’s when I hear the moaning.

Quickly, I spin around and see the old man standing in the middle of the room, whip in hand... wait... what?

His back is to me and his legs are spread, seeing as he’s completely naked, I see *too* much. Especially his balls drooping toward the ground like they want to become one with it.

On the bed is a naked woman with her ass in the air. She has wrinkles making her ass sag, telling me that she has to be as old as the man.

“If this is how it usually is, then I’m excited to see what we get into next!” Seneca says.

I quickly turn to him with wide eyes. “This is not! No! Not! Oh my god!”

“I mean... I’ve seen a lot of kinky porn, but I’ve *never* seen two dinosaurs go at it. It’s like 3D porn, you know? You basically have the gift to constantly watch porn,” he says.

The man smacks her ass with the whip and the wrinkles and excess skin shudders as she *giggles*.

“This isn’t... this is someone’s private memories! We need to leave!” I’m not sure I honestly care at the moment about their private memories. I just care about the scars I will have to deal with for the rest of my life.

“Yeah, but you said it yourself that you would automatically go to the memory that deals with the case. So this must be it, right? We just haven’t gotten to that part.”

When I look up at him, I realize that he’s grinning like a fiend. “I *guess*.”

“It’s just some balls. I mean... saggy balls but balls... look at how far they stretch. Those have to be a record right? He could jump rope with those.”

“Who *hired you?*”

He starts laughing. “We could treat it like an anatomy class to make it less awkward. He is now... oh my god.”

“Look away!”

“Oh NO!”

“STOP WATCHING!”

“I can’t! How’s he... how... no! No!”

“This has been a horrible day.”

“This is definitely not what I thought I’d be doing today either! The way he’s just going *at it.*”

“Who *hired you?*” I repeat, *refusing* to look at the scene before me. Seneca is adhered to it.

“If I’m being honest, I was reluctant to come here... I really didn’t want to do anything with my gift, but they thought this transfer would be the best. If I knew this is how my day was going to go, I wouldn’t have even hesitated!”

“No! We don’t... we don’t just stumble upon great-grandparents doing... having... this! We... do other stuff.”

“The *movement* he has. He had to have had his hips replaced!”

“I think they hired the wrong person. This is a joke! Oh my god! That’s what it is. It’s April Fools’ day. Keith thought it would be hilarious to be mean to me. You’re actually some random guy they hired.”

“It’s March 2.”

“Early April Fools’ day!”

He starts laughing and it makes me smile. “We’re going to have so much fun together.”

“I’m not sure we will.”

“I can already imagine the adventures. Oh look, they’re finished.”

I look over and see that they are most definitely NOT finished before glaring at Seneca, who thinks it’s hilarious. “My eyes are *burning.*”

“Oh, a little vagina isn’t gonna burn your eyes. Unless the lady hasn’t washed it in a while then all bets are off.”

“I’m going to gag.”

“They’re either finishing or having a heart attack. I can’t tell.”

“What are those noises?” I cry.

He just laughs harder and thankfully, during all of that, they start putting clothes back on. Ron kisses the woman, says his goodbyes, and heads toward the door.

“Now we can just... follow him?” Seneca asks curiously.

“Maybe... I’m feeling a little sick,” I say as I start following after him. Outside the house, he glances down at his phone before he begins walking.

“This is so crazy. Now that I don’t have glorious sex going on to distract me, it’s... I just can’t even wrap my mind around this. If I took off running that way, what would happen?” he asks as he points in the opposite direction.

“Nothing. There’d be nothing there, nowhere to run to. While he probably mentally *knows* what’s that way, unless he’s literally never been there, it won’t be connected or a concern of the current memory. You can’t go beyond what the memory is.”

“This is just... amazing. How do you do this?”

I shrug. “I honestly... don’t know.”

“Do you like your gift?”

I look over at him because the question seems to have a lot of weight to it. Does he not like his gift? “I don’t know. I like that I can help people, but I hate many of the things I see. What happened in there, generally isn’t what we walk into.”

Just then, a man steps out of an alleyway and grabs onto the older man.

“This is,” I say solemnly.

The man is wearing a hood that disguises most of his face, but as Ron stumbles and slams into the building wall, he grabs onto the man, pulling his hood halfway down. It doesn’t help him, but it pushes the hood down which allows me to get a better look at the attacker.

“I want to do something to help him...” Seneca says quietly. “But then I remember it already happened... and I can’t.”

Ron struggles to pull away as the young man grabs for his wallet. “Exactly. But that’s why we’re here to help. Hitting his head when he fell into the wall is probably what made him forget, but we can see some of the attacker’s face even with the hood on. He’s white...”

“Okay... you’re right. He looks to be in his late twenties, maybe? About six feet tall.”

Together, we pick apart every detail of the man that we can figure out, and I realized just how helpful it is to have someone beside me during it. And maybe this won’t be half-bad.

Present:

I’m lying on the couch, head on Seneca’s lap. His fingers lazily run through my hair as we watch the movie that’s on the TV.

The elderly couple on the screen lean forward and gently kiss each other, and I *already* know what’s coming next.

“Do you remember the first time we watched geriatric porn together?” Seneca asks.

“No.”

“Fine, it wasn’t *porn*. Sex.”

“No.”

His fingers sink deeper in my hair. “It was my first day at work, you took me into that memory and forced my innocent eyes to watch them.”

“No.”

“He had a whip.”

“Didn’t happen.” Even though I keep my eyes fixated on the TV, I know he’s grinning at me.

“That’s weird. I clearly remember it. She was on all fours, remember?”

“No.”

He starts chuckling. “I’m going to keep describing it until you remember.”

I groan before rolling onto my back. “Why? We’re watching a sweet movie and you have to ruin it by making me remember... *that*.”

“You were so embarrassed. Gosh, you were so cute. Now you’re used to me and you don’t get as embarrassed anymore. It’s a bore.”

“You’ve sacked me out like they would do to the mustangs to tame them,” I say. “I just... go with it now.”

“Have you ever purposely gone into a memory about sex?” he asks curiously.

Thoroughly disappointed in myself, I nod. "Once."

"Really? I can't imagine you doing that."

"I was sixteen and... curious. I was so embarrassed, yet I couldn't stop watching. It was horrible. And I felt so guilty about it afterwards that I could never look the guy in the eyes again."

"Who was it?" Seneca asks eagerly.

"A teacher I had a crush on."

"Oh my god. You little vixen! Oh! I'm going to go into the memory of you going into that memory so I can see your cute blushing face."

I sit up so fast that I smash my forehead right into his chin since he'd been in the process of leaning over me.

"Fuck!" he cries.

"I'm so sorry!" I say as I grab his face. "But no."

"You broke my face, and you're still going to prohibit me from going into your sex fantasy?" he asks as he holds his chin.

"Oh, like you haven't beaten me up and bloodied me plenty," I say as I pull his hand away from his face to check. "Just a little red. Are you alright?"

"Nuh uh... but maybe if I saw your sex fantasy, I'd feel better."

I shake my head. "You're my only sex fantasy," I say dryly.

He sniffs a little, and for some reason, it kind of turns me on. I need my brain checked. "I just... want a little sneak peek."

I cup his face and gently kiss his cheek. "I'm sorry about smashing your chin."

"Thanks, babe, but that won't make me forget."

I scowl, mad my plan failed. "Why?"

"Because I love you too much."

"If you loved me, you'd respect my privacy."

He snorts, so I grab him in a head lock and push him down onto his back. I crawl onto his stomach and stare down at him.

"You're crushing me! Your ass is too heavy! Death is coming for me."

I lift my foot up. "Real death will be coming soon," I say as I direct my foot toward his face.

"No! No! Why are you so aggressive!"

He grabs my leg, yanking me forward and whipping me off the couch like the child he is at heart. Then he oozes off the couch, onto me. "Hey, baby," he says in a creepy voice.

"Don't you have *things* to do?" I ask. "Like... finishing a movie?"

"Yes, to penetrate your memories."

I push him off of me and roll on top of him so he's the one being crushed. "No, thank you."

"I would let you go into *any* memory of mine that you would like. Want to see the first time I watched porn?"

"Hell no! That would be like... borderline pedophilia, right?"

Seneca thinks about it for a moment. "Would it?"

"Yeah?"

"Hmm... I don't know because I'm currently an adult."

"Yes, but I'd be watching a 'not adult' you. Let's not talk about this. Gross. Please. Erase this question from my memory. You always ask the weirdest questions. 'If I was a werewolf,

would you let me fuck you as a wolf?’ Or ‘If I was a merman, would you let me fuck you on top of a whale?’”

“Those are important questions!” He chuckles as he looks down at me. “Alright, how about the first time I met you?”

“That’s a strangely normal suggestion, but... I was there too.”

“Actually, you weren’t.”

“I wasn’t?” I ask in surprise.

“Well... not really.”

He pulls me down against him, and I set my head on his chest and close my eyes. “Can you pull us into the memory?”

I take his hand in mine and think about the first time he met me.

When I open my eyes, I’m in a small room and find a younger Seneca standing beside me. He doesn’t look any younger, it was only a couple years ago, but his hair is a little longer and his facial hair is borderline a beard. He’s standing next to Keith as they watched a man through a one-way mirror.

The current Seneca is standing on my left, hand still held tightly. “This was the first time I saw you.”

The past Seneca turns to Keith. “I just... I don’t know. My boss thought this could be a good opportunity, but... a part of me thinks I need to quit law enforcement. I haven’t been happy in it for a couple of years now.”

Keith nods. “That’s what Patterson was saying. But this could be a good opportunity. It’s completely different than your last job. It’s specialized, and you’ll mostly be working with one partner. Patterson says that you’re a good cop and he’d hate to see you leave law enforcement. I’ve never worked with you, but if Patterson is saying something good about you, I know you must be a good cop. Now it’s none of my business why you think you need to leave or what the issue is, but I have a special detective who I think also needs some help. And you might be the helping hand he needs.”

“I... I’ll... see.”

“You must be at least slightly interested, or you wouldn’t have shown up.”

“I showed up more for Patterson than I did for myself, I think.” Past Seneca shifts his attention to the man sitting in the room.

Keith turns to see what he’s looking at. “We believe he raped a woman who’d been staying in a motel. He was next door to her, and she said that he pushed her into the room and assaulted her. He claims he didn’t, and we have no proof to back up either claim.”

The door to the room they’re staring into opens, and I watch myself walk in. I’ll never get used to seeing myself in a memory. I walk over to the chair and sit down. Without saying a word, I reach out and touch the man’s arm.

“That’s all he needs to do and he can find the memory?” Seneca asks curiously.

“To my understanding. I’ve worked with Chevy for many years, but he doesn’t talk about the process much. When he was a kid and it became known what he could do, the police department grabbed onto him and forced him to help them so many times. I mean... suddenly, we have the power to confirm things that would have always been seen as a secret. He could tell us where they hid the weapon. How they did it, what they did. No criminal was safe from him.”

“But they were also making a child see things a child should never see.”

Keith nods. “Correct. I hated it because I could see how much it hurt him. So once I had some power of my own, I pulled him in with me. Chevy may say that he’s here because he wants

to be, but he never had much of a choice. He's too kind of a man to live with the ability to save others and do nothing with it."

"So... I would have to see these things as well," Seneca seems to realize.

"You would. And not everyone can handle it."

"But right now... he's doing it alone." It's almost a whisper.

"He is."

"It'd have to be awful facing it alone every time."

"I think it would."

By that point, past me has pulled myself from the memory. I slowly stand up and walk to the door. From here, I can't see my face, but I don't have to know what expression I'm wearing.

"You can think about it. It's not an easy job, but Chevy tells me he does it because he can stop people like that man from ever hurting anyone again. If it wasn't for him, that man would be left to walk free and hurt others."

Seneca sets his hand against the glass. "I want to help... but I don't know if I can. Or if my gift will even allow me to help, but I want to try. If it doesn't work... then I'll go back to my plan of leaving law enforcement."

Keith smiles at him. "Sounds good. I'm very happy to have you join the team," he says as he pats him on the back.

They step out of the room and I follow them. That's when Seneca notices past me about fifteen feet down the hallway, leaning against the wall. He watches me for a long moment before Keith notices.

"I'll go talk to him. If you have any questions, let me know," Keith says.

"I will," Seneca says, eyes never leaving me. Then he seems to force himself to turn around and walk away. For some reason, I find myself still following him.

"Keith told me someone was coming to watch but he didn't tell me who," I say as I look at the current Seneca.

"I still don't know why I joined you... I was so unhappy with myself. It was a combination of me thinking I needed to leave and them thinking they needed to put me somewhere safer that led me to this decision. I was *so* close to just putting in my two weeks' notice when I was asked to stop in and talk to Keith. That moment... when I saw what you did... has completely changed my life," he says as he looks over at me. "*You* have changed my life more than you could even... *understand*."

"You acted so carefree and goofy and... just *you* when you walked into that office the day I met you."

"I was always good at hiding my feelings. After Gabby died... I became a master at pretending like everything was perfect on the outside while suffering on the inside."

"You'd never hide anything like that from me again, would you?" I ask.

He smiles at me and it's completely genuine. "Of course not. I can't hide anything from you."

I look down at his hand that I'm still holding before lifting it up and kissing it. "You better not."

"Or what? You'll spank me?"

"I'll pull you into the memory of us watching the old people having sex."

His eyes get wide. "I really want to see that. I want to relive that moment!"

I snort. "That was supposed to be punishment!"

“I know, but I want to see your cute face as you slowly die of embarrassment. Can we?”

“No!”

He grins even though I know he’s dying to see it.

I shake my head at my ridiculous partner. “Thank you for showing this to me. It probably wasn’t easy.”

He shrugs. “At that time, I think we were both in a bad place. Too bad we were both too stupid to get together sooner.”

I raise an eyebrow “*Both?*”

“BOTH.”

“*Both?*” I repeat.

He grins and kisses my cheek. “Yep. Both.”

I shake my head and pull him out of the memory.

“Oh my god,” he groans. “I forgot how heavy you are.”

“Oh shush.”

“That’s alright, I love you enough I’ll let you crush my internal organs. The doctor’ll be like, ‘How’d your stomach explode?’ And I’ll just be like, ‘True love, man.’”

I sigh but don’t bother moving *at all*.

I could lie here all night with his arms protectively holding me down. I know he wouldn’t mind it even if I did crush his organs.

“It was the best decision I ever made because it led me to this very moment. I wouldn’t have changed a second of it.”

“Not even the second where you shot me?” I ask.

“Shhh, hon. Sometimes you need to just be seen and not heard.”

I chuckle, but I also willingly give in.

He’s silent for only a moment. “Did you see how magnificent my hair was?”

“No, you’re not growing a beard.”

“It was beautiful.”

“No beard.”

“Mustache it is then.”

“There will be no sex then.”

“Think about how the hairs could tickle your taint as I lick your butthole.”

I clamp my hand over his mouth. “Let’s finish our movie.”

He laughs, and I tuck my head away from him so he can’t see that I’m smiling. “Sounds good.”

Tightly, I squeeze onto him, never wanting this moment to end.