

I've agreed to meet Inspector Kane Morgan and Sionn Murphy down at Sionn's pub, Finnegan's, a brightly lit and homey Irish place built right on one of San Francisco's piers. A longtime Pier landmark, the pub is surprisingly modern and comfortable with soft Irish music playing in the background as huge amounts of homestyle meals are brought white platters and served alongside rich lagers and ales. Having to drive, I opt instead for a bottle of hard apple cider but am more than willing to be talked into one of Finnegan's signature dishes, deep fried jalapeno and garlic mashed potato nuggets.

We're sitting outside, tucked into the corner of the patio area where Damien Mitchell first met Sionn Murphy and where Sionn'd broken the one rule Finnegan's was known for; No buskers playing in front of the pub. The cider was fantastic, the potatoe things were glorious and the men sitting across of me were heavenly.

They're both handsome. A bit rough in places, mostly in the lazy stubble of their jaws and the specks of varnish dotting Kane's fingers. Kane is the bigger of the two, bulkier but Sionn's shoulders were just as wide. Leaner than Morgan, Murphy appeared more relaxed, easily slouching in the comfortable chairs Finnegan's supplied for its patio diners where Kane's attention often drifted to watch the people passing by. I could see what Miki meant when he said his lover couldn't *help* but be a cop.

It was a bit like having lunch with a predator.

Unlike the blond terrier happily gnawing on a rib bone from his hidey hole beneath the table.

I move my backpack so it's wedged between my chair and the wall. After a moment, I think better of the plan and pick it up to put it on the empty chair next to me.

"Good idea there, love," Sionn growls through a sip of his beer. "Damned thing's a menace."

"I told you to use a hamper." Unlike Sionn, Kane only has a touch of an Irish accent but it's definitely there, splashing a hint of emerald through his words.

"What kind of dog eats a hole through a man's underwear?" The other man complains to me. "And just mine. Not Damie's or Miki's. Just mine. Piece of shite, that's what he is."

Dude continues to chew away the meat from his rib bone, stopping only long enough to snap down the potatoe nugget Kane slips him from the plate.

"Lima beans, Kane. That's what he's going to be getting tonight in his dinner. And yer the one whose going to be smelling that all night. Long shirting green clouds whiffing up from the bottom of the bed." Sionn promises.

"They were his favourite piece of underwear." Kane drops his voice but it's still loud enough for passer-bys to hear him. It's clearly no attempt on his part to be secretive and Sionn rolls his eyes at the other man. "Had a giraffe sleeve in the front for his... thing. No wonder the dog thought it was a chew toy."

The retaliation comes swiftly and hard with a punch to Kane's shoulder from Sionn's loosely clenched fist. "Piece of shite. Just like yer dog."

"He's not my dog," Kane shoots back. This time, Sionn only snorts and goes back to picking out jalapeno slices from his potatoes. "How about if we get started? I'm working a shift with Kel this afternoon and Reekhound here needs a bath."

"Shouldn't have been letting him chase those seagulls." Sionn shrugs off Kane's evil eye and winks at me. "The only thing that dog likes more than destroying a man's belongings is rolling in bird shit."

"I hosed him off." Kane interjects. "I just want to scrub him with some soap. Kind of like I want to scrub Sionn's mouth out with some right now."

"Okay, let's get started then," I agree, making sure my sneakers are out of dog chewing reach. "Let's start with you, Murphy. How do you pronounce your first name?"

"Ah, SHOON." He enunciates it very clearly. "It's rather like starting off with SHOE but stopping before you get to the end then sliding in an Oooooo then an Uhn. SHU-OO-Uhn."

"But roll it together. Barely two syllables." The other man intercedes.

"We have some very traditional names. Kane here? His middle name is EEee." Sionn chuckles.

"It's spelt A-O-D-H. It's a family name."

"EEEEEEEE." Sionn mocks him openly. "Sounds like a Sesame Street sketch, don't it? A muppet looking for the other half of his word."

Kane snorts. "Thought you didn't watch that show?"

"Damien felt I needed an education. Apparently it's required watching. He's an odd one, sometimes."

"Sometimes?" The other man laughs. "Okay, next question."

"Give me a short description of what your lovers are like." I read off from my list. "How do you see them? Kane, you first. Miki. And what part of your soul was drawn to you lover?"

"Shit, how do I see Miki?" Kane whistles in a low drawn out bell.

"Naked." Sionn nudges my elbow and smirks. "All. The. Time."

"Shut up. You're the one we caught doing it on the roof. I'm going to wash off those beanbags when I bathe the dog." Kane appears to think on what he is going to say. The expression on his face goes from contemplative to a soft reminiscence, his wolfish blue eyes turning smoky. "I'd have to say Miki's like drinking starlight. Yeah, sometimes it's like trying to control a fire hose but he's... special. Complicated in some ways but really, simple if you know him."

"He lives so much on instinct. He's wary with new people and that hurts my heart. I wish he'd not had that childhood of his but we're working on it. Or he's working on it. I see him trying to trust. Learning to trust others." Kane smiles wistfully. "He trusts me. He opens up and shares. I think that's the biggest and best gift I've ever been given. Even when he's pissed off and lets me have it, I know it's because he trusts me not to walk away. That's big. He's brilliant, funny and a little bit feral. Okay, a lot feral. There's a lot of street in him."

"He's not gentle," Sionn remarks. "Don't ever let that pretty face fool you."

"Oh shit no, not a gentle bone in his body," Kane laughs. "He dreams a lot. Goes off in his world and picks out words. You can see that when he writes songs. He disconnects from the noise around him but I think a lot of people see him as this fragile, beautiful boy and he's a lot stronger than most people give him credit for. Hell, I don't give him enough credit."

"He can fuck you up nine ways from Sunday if you threaten him. To hell with the normal six. He'll get you down on the ground and take you out." Sionn rubs at his jaw as he speaks. "Fast little fuck. Hits hard. And often."

"I told you not to sneak up on him."

"Damie does it. Scares the shite out of Miki all the time. Sneaky bastards, both of them." He picks at another pepper, popping it in his mouth. "Learned my lesson. Never doing that again. Bastard cheats."

"Miki's a master at finding whatever is around him and taking you out." Kane shrugs. "He doesn't *play* well. I'm trying to teach him that sometimes it's okay to just mess around."

"Man's crazy in the head. Something's broken in that brain. Never knew someone to turn a game of Pool Chicken into a Raging Death Match."

"Yeah, he's got a problem sometimes." Kane acknowledges. "We're working on it. He *does* know how to play. But it has to be with certain people. Me and Damie so far. I think."

"And the soul part?" I prompt.

"I'd have to say I first wanted to take care of him. Flaw I've got. I want to fix the world, you know?" He grimaces. "Hardest thing to learn with Miki is when to let him be and when to step in. But I think what drew me in was his fierceness. He's wild, inside. Untamed in parts. I think I love that about him. He comes to me not because he needs to but because he wants to. He makes me lose my breath and ah, when he smiles at me, it's like it touches parts of my soul I never thought *couldn't* be dark. He's gentle with me. And if he loves you, there's no going back. It's full throttle. You'll never have a doubt how much he loves when he finally does."

"Your turn, Sionn." I pronounce his name carefully. "Damien."

"Ah, Damie's different than Miki. More civilized, I think. I'd have thought of the two of them, Damie would be more aggressive but he's not. He plots more. He'd be the one to do a prank. A long con. Charming fecking git. Probably could coax a priest out of his collection plate if he'd wanted it."

"Probably at least half-Irish." Kane slides in.

"At least." The other man nods. "Of the two, he's the gentler one but he guides Miki. With me, he can relax. I think for a long time—even before the accident—so much of Damien's energy was spent pushing things to where he wanted to be. The band, his music—everything. Now he's found Miki, he's home and he can be with me and not worry. Kane's a part of that too. He doesn't have to worry so much about his brother. He can just be... Damie. It's been good."

"And the rest? The soul?"

"I'd have to say he's someone I know will stand next to me, shoulder to shoulder. Kane and Miki are introverts in a lot of ways. They'd like to stay home and cuddle on the couch. I think Damien and I want to be doing things. We match each other's pace. He lights fires in me. Motivates me. He's a bit pushy sometimes but he's always the one who wants to see what's over the next hill. He makes me believe I can do anything—accomplish anything. And then turns around and tells me he loves me. Does something to my insides."

"You love him." Kane is stating the obvious. Sionn's face can only be described as besotted. "Yeah, I get it. Miki does that to me too. Something they do to us...that inside thing. Makes you wonder how the hell you lived before they got to you."

"Yeah, that." Sionn agrees. "What's next?"

"Do we hear wedding bells for either of you?" I consult my notes. "The reader asks if might take place at St. Patrick's church?"

"Marriage?" Sionn exhales hard. "Too.... God, that's a scary word. I can tell you right now, Saint Paddy's is out. Catholic, you know. They're not ready and willing yet to marry two men. It's hard sometimes being Catholic and gay..."

"Always hard." Kane interrupts. "You've got to remember, the Church changes so slowly but it's a part of who we are. Who our families are. I'm not going to turn my back on God. Sionn probably isn't either but we're going to always push for the Church to change and accept everyone who wants to be there."

"Agreed," Sionn says as he taps his beer bottle against Kane's in a short salute.

"Next question, how about kids?"

If marriage made the men perplexed, I'd have put down their reactions about children as a cross between horror and fear.

"No," Sionn speaks first. He's the one with more horror and fear in his eyes. "Just...no."

"I think it's too early to be talking about children." Kane's response is gentler in tone but there's definitely an edge to his voice. "I think Miki's not even considered kids. He's not at a place in his life where he can think about them. Maybe in ten or fifteen years. Honestly, while I'd like a kid or two, it's not a dealbreaker for me. I'd rather have a happy Miki than a worried one. He'd stress out over baggage he'd bring to any kid."

"Damien too." Sionn shrugs. "Shite and Hell, I can't say I'd be good for any kid. Kane would be. He'd be a good dad."

"Had the best one growing up." He grins widely.

"Git."

"Arse."

"Next to the last question and then I'll leave you two to your days. Where would you like to go—anywhere in the world?" Their answers are swift and simultaneous.

"Ireland." Both men say then laugh.

"I'd want to take Miki home. To see my kin. I think he'd like it." Kane begins.

"Damie would love the music." Sionn remarks. "No pub would be safe from the two of them. They'd be into everything but it would be fun."

"Yeah, I'd have to say Ireland." Kane nods. "And the last?"

"Where do you see yourselves over the next year? With your respective lovers?"

"Ah, I'm kind of hoping Miki will agree to see someone about his past." Kane murmurs. "I think he needs to talk that out a bit but it's not up to me. That'll be his choice. His decision."

"Damie wants that too," Sionn agrees. "I think I'd just like to get Damien settled in his own place. We're all sharing Miki's warehouse for right now and there's some talk about shifting things around. Privacy on both sides would be nice."

"It'll be hard," The other man says softly. "They need to be with each other for a bit. I don't want either of them to feel like they can't wake up and find the other immediately. It'll be a few months or so before it sinks in that they've found each other again. I don't want to take that way from them. Not now. Maybe not ever. Love one..."

"And you'd better really like the other." Sionn laughs. "They're good. Really, nice guys. Even if we weren't involved with them, they'd be friends."

"I don't know about that," Kane chuckles. "I'm a cop. They're none too fond of cops."

"Criminals at heart."

"Pirates at least." Kane nudges the dog, disdainfully picking up the sopping wet rib bone. "Want this?"

"Oh no, you're getting a doggy bag to take that home with you or he'll be tearing up the place looking for it." Sionn shook my hand and stood up when I reached for my bag. "Thank you for coming by. It's was good to talk to you."

"It was great having both of you sit down with me." I take a step and my sneaker flops loosely around my foot. Looking down, I see the reason why and sigh. "Now, can either one of you find my shoelace? Or are we going to have to go to the vet's and see Dude actually ate it this time?"