

The session at The Sound ran long. Sienn and Damien dropped them off before speeding away in the Challenger, going for a late afternoon cruise down the coast. Miki didn't expect to see them again. Or least not for the rest of the weekend. Their afternoon drives usually ended up with them finding a hotel room somewhere along the way and spending a few days by themselves. Sure enough, as soon as Miki got his key into the lock, he got a text from Damien telling him they'd be back on Monday.

Kane had instituted a not-to-be-broken rule of closing the garage doors, so Miki didn't know Kane was home until he saw his cop's car keys sitting in the porcelain ramen bowl on the front table. Dude's toenails clicked in a rapid scramble from the kitchen and the terrier bolted out towards him, careening around the dining room table set up between the peninsula and the living space. The dog skidded to a stop before he plowed into Miki, and he crouched down, grateful for Dude's consideration. Scratching the terrier's ears, Miki toed off his Converse's then nudged them to the side of the table where eventually, Kane would point them out and ask if he'd meant to leave them there.

"I leave them there all the time," he informed the dog. "That's how I know where to find them again."

Living with other people was sometimes difficult, especially when those other people have been raised to be much more civilized than he was. There were all kinds of household rules everyone seemed to know but him and while he'd picked a few up living with Damien over the years, it apparently hadn't been enough. Laundry was easy enough to do, but Miki pretty much had two baskets, one for dirty clothes and one for clean. The closet was a place to hang leather jackets and guitar straps, and the dresser the interior designer put in the master suite never made it downstairs to the room he'd claimed as his bedroom following the accident.

Kane changed all of that. He and his brothers spent one Saturday morning rearranging furniture only to stand there dumbfounded when Miki asked if anyone told him to do so. The brothers snuck out, so he and Kane could have a glorious, high-volume fight about boundaries, space and change.

The sex afterwards had been great, and Kane took another step closer to understanding Miki's need to control his own space. Although, he did admit, the bedroom did look a hell of a lot better, and it now had enough storage and bookshelves to fit all of their crap.

He still had a hard time remembering to fold his clothes and put them way away, but Kane agreed, so long as it worked for Miki.

"Where's your other guy?" Miki asked Dude. "Is he off with one of his brothers or —"

There was what looked like a large blue and orange plastic machine-gun sitting on the couch with a note taped to it. Two round canisters much like the one at the front of the gun sat next to it as well as a pair of clear protective glasses like the ones he'd seen Kane use in his wood working shop. Frowning, Miki picked up the note and read it, then looked down at his dog.

"So let me get this straight, he wants me to play a game of Nerf darts? To actually hunt him down through the house and shoot at him with these things?" Miki picked up the plastic toy, surprised at its heft. It seemed simple enough to operate and the note told him to leave the canisters there, as backup ammunition for when they'd run out of their first one. "Okay, so not only am I to shoot him with these, if I run out of darts I'm supposed to make it back here and reload?"

"The guy shoots guns for a living," he explained to the dog. "Yeah, to be fair we do play rock band at the parents' house but it's not like those are actual guitars. You're just tapping buttons. Asshole wants me to call him when I'm ready. This is crazy."

Kane picked up on the first ring.

"You ready to do this, Sinjun?" He barked through the phone, and Miki laughed. "You find this funny? You're going to go down."

"Probably," Miki agreed. "Because I don't know what the fuck I'm doing."

"It's pretty easy," Kane rumbled through the line. "What you have there is a Nerf N-Strike Elite HyperFire Blaster. Canister just pulls out and the other one snaps back in. It's just like a camera. Point-and-shoot."

"Okay. You're crazy but okay." He was about to hang up then said, "Dude's not going to eat these things, right?"

"No," he replied gently. "There is another kind that shoots little balls, but I figured he would probably think those were his. The darts are pretty big, and he didn't seem interested in them, even after I shot one across the room. So I've got his back on this. Just don't trip over the dog when you're running for your life."

With that, Kane hung up.

"I don't see why we're doing this but I guess it's some weird suburban thing," Miki informed the dog. "Okay, puppy. Let's go get my ass handed to me."

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He found Kane in the garage hunkered down behind the Hummer. A volley of darts went off between them and a few found their mark. Dude joined the fray with a few barks then gleefully danced out of the way as Kane ran past him. Miki gave chase as best he could, scoring a direct hit between Kane's shoulder blades then skidded to a stop when Kane mounted the stairs leading to the second floor.

Kane paused the landing, glancing down at a disgusted Miki. Twisting his face into a rueful grimace, he said, "Stairs should be off limits. Your knee. There's no way you're going to take these at a dead run."

"Not if I want to be able to walk a couple of hours," he shot back, tilting his face up to meet Kane's apologetic gaze. "And I'd be a sitting duck trying to get up them. I mean the physical therapy's been great but..."

"Okay then I'll take the penalty and give you a two-minute head start to hole up somewhere. Is that good?"

"I'll take the two-minute head start and you pick up the darts we shot and reload my canister. After that, that's when my two minutes begin," Miki negotiated. "And if you want to reload after that without using the other canister, that's your time."

"You sure you haven't played this before?" Kane remarked sarcastically, coming down the stairs. "Because that sounds like somebody who knows what they're asking."

"I've played more than enough games of quarters and poker while on the road. Hagglng terms is like breathing." He handed Kane his weapon. "The sooner you start reloading, the sooner my two minutes start."

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An hour and a half later they were both lying on the couch, exhausted and panting. Dude was chewing on a beef bone he'd been given as a treat, gnawing on it after he'd drank about a gallon of water from running around with Miki. A couple of bottles of unsweetened iced tea sat on the coffee table, but Miki was too tired to grab his. Instead, he scooted up to the L-corner of the sectional, and laid his head on Kane's shoulder.

They were both damp with sweat, and Miki could only taste salt on his lips when he dabbed at them to ease their dryness. His legs hurt a little bit, his thighs burning as if he'd just done a three-hour show, but his knee seem to be holding up, despite the slight throb in it. He was bone-dead worn out, but the middle of his soul felt happy beyond belief. It was as if he'd swallowed a star or held all of Kane's kisses in his chest. Content, Miki sighed and let out a short laugh.

"Where did you keep getting the darts from?" Kane grumbled. "You never seemed to run out of ammunition."

"I carried the empty canister with me and reloaded whenever I found one on the ground. Then I would switch them out." Miki laughed at Kane's disgusted hiss. "What did you do? Leave the canister on the couch and keep coming back for it?"

"That's exactly what I did. The canisters are supposed to stay on the couch. Or at least near it."

"That wasn't something you set down in the rules. And you know me, if you don't tell me the rules, I'm in a do what I want."

"Yeah, I should understand that about you by now," Kane murmured then bent down to kiss the top of Miki's head. "You doing okay? Is your leg bugging you?"

"No, I'm good." He sniffed at his arm. "I need to shower but I'm good. I just want to lie here for a little bit."

"I'm good with that too."

He tilted his chin, staring up at Kane's face. "What made you think about doing this? It was so not on my radar."

"Well, funny thing about it is, *a ghra*," Kane replied. "Kel and I were going to question someone about a case and we came across some kids playing with Nerf guns in the street. He and I got to talking about shit we use to do is kids then it dawned on me you probably never *played*. Not like we did. So, I just wanted to give you that. I wanted you to have fun. Just pure, simple fun."

"I've never heard you laugh like you laughed today and listening to you was like I was bathing in a sea of stars. I didn't even mind that you kick my ass," he chuckled at Miki's scoffing snort. "It's true. Totally handed me my butt, babe. But I wouldn't mind losing a million Nerf battles if it means I can hear you laugh like you did today."

"It was the *best*." Kane's arm came down, draping across Miki's side and despite their sweaty dampness, Miki'd felt happy. An odd, effervescent but worn out happy. "It was one of the best presents you've ever given me. Thanks. That was cool and I'm probably going to fucking hurt in a couple hours but I really had a good time."

"Today's the day Dude stole a sandwich from my shop. He would come into my place every day and fuck with me until weeks later he went too far and I followed him home.," Kane whispered. "I figured it's an anniversary of sorts for us. Kind of the start of you and me. So I wanted to give you something special, just because I'd hoped it would make you laugh. And God knows I love hearing you laugh."

"I love hearing you laugh too." Miki snuggled back, adoring the feel of strength in Kane's hard body. "Actually, I just love all of you."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, *a ghra*, because I'm going to have to ask you to get up so we can go take a shower," Kane said, tightening his arm around Miki's chest into a quick, intense hug. "Because the Nerf guns weren't the only present I got for you today. I might have bought a building with a certain fire escape attached to it and I thought you might want to go see it tonight before we have dinner someplace."

Miki pulled free of the hug, sitting up so he could rest back on his haunches, facing Kane. Cupping his cop's face, he stared into Kane's stormy blue eyes and said, "You take my breath away. And I can't believe you bought a fucking building for me but dude, all I want to do is stand under the water with you then spend the rest of my night making you scream my name. K, I love you. I mean, man, I am stupid in love with you but we can go see the building tomorrow. Right now, my life is going to be all about you."