

“Come on, my darlings,” Izzie encouraged his daughters as he put the car in park outside the family home. It was late at night. The drive home from London had taken longer than usual with an accident stopping traffic. The girls had grown tired. Izzie was tired as well.

Auralee groaned. “Dad....”

“Unless you want to sleep in the car and freeze...” he replied with a humored grin.

Izzie herded the sleeping children out of the car and to the front door. He unlocked it.

“Up to bed, girls, I’ll get everything from the car, then I’ll be up to tuck everyone in.”

“Ugh, Dad, we’re too old for that,” Lux, who was eleven, stated.

“Never. I’ll still be kissing you goodnight when you’re tucking in your own babies.”

He shoed them inside, waiting until he heard their footsteps on the stairs, then returned to the car to collect their bags. Because it was late, Izzie left the bags by the door with a plan to put everything away later. Upstairs, Izzie checked in on all the kids. They didn’t have a huge house, but there was enough space that only Kaye and Lux had to share a room out of the five kids.

Asleep. All three of his girls were passed out in their beds, and his youngest son, Nate, was hanging headfirst off the edge of his. With a smile, Izzie gently fixed Nate before checking on Jasper, then headed to his room.

The deep sounds of a man moaning behind closed doors caught Izzie’s attention as he drew near. Dawson must be pleasuring himself was what Izzie thought, and he may need a bit of assistance. As tired as he was from the drive, Izzie was never able to resist his sexual desires when it came to Dawson on the verge of cumming.

He opened the door quietly, planning on surprising his husband by joining in on the fun. What Izzie discovered behind that closed door was not his husband masturbating. What he discovered was far worse than anything his eyes could have imagined. Dawson was being pleased, all right. He was being pleased by a woman. And not just any woman. One that Izzie was very familiar with. Ashley. The woman who had birthed all five of their children for large sums of money.

He couldn’t say anything. There were no words leaving his lips even though they were moving up and down trying to say something. Instead, Izzie, on the verge of tears, slowly backed out of the room and closed the door. He hoped desperately that it was his imagination that had seen Dawson having sex with Ashley in their bed. Nothing could unsee that for the man. Nothing could hurt worse than what he had just seen.

Izzie choked on a sob that came from deep within as he raced from the closed door to the stairs. The tears began spilling from his eyes as he descended them in a desperate need to get as far away from the bedroom as possible. He couldn’t comprehend how this had happened. Dawson was gay. He was married to Izzie. And Izzie had been a damn good husband to that man.

He reached the kitchen where he grabbed hold of the counter near the sink and sobbed. Tears fell down his cheeks and dripped into the metal basin leaving droplets of water. He couldn’t control himself. He

cried, silently, into the kitchen sink where they did the dishes together every night. The same sink they had foolishly blown dishwater bubbles at one another when they were younger and still flirting playfully. The same sink where Dawson had cut his hand on a dropped knife and Izzie cleaned his wound, bandaged it up, and kissed it better. The stupid sink had way too many happy memories and now Izzie was crying over it reliving all those stupid memories that were now tainted with Dawson's betrayal.

How long had he been sleeping with Ashley? Izzie wondered through tears, snot running out of his nose and the hitch in his throat every time he tried to take a breath and calm himself down. He grabbed some paper towel off the roll to blow his nose, and a second one to wipe away some of the tears staining his cheeks. He took some deep breaths while clenching that soggy paper towel until he settled into deeper sadness at everything that was now lost. How was he supposed to look back on all the happy memories without thinking of what he'd just walked in on?

What was he supposed to do now?

Izzie wiped his eyes once more, this time on the sleeve of his sweater – something he didn't usually do but in his current state, he could care less if he soiled a designer.

Feeling exhausted from crying for the past ten minutes, Izzie sat down at the kitchen table. He didn't move. He didn't do anything. He just sat there, in the dark, staring at the wooden table. They bought this table at an auction when their little one wasn't big enough for their growing family. Izzie's sister-in-law had dragged them to it ensuring they would love auctions. Izzie did. Dawson didn't get the same thrill out of them. Dawson didn't seem to get the same thrill out of a lot of things anymore, Izzie sighed deeply in defeat.

"Izzie?"

He glanced up. He hadn't heard anyone come into the room or the squeaky step on the staircase. He wasn't expecting someone to creep up on him but there was Dawson standing in the entrance of the doorway in just his underwear, and Goddammit he was beautiful. Izzie hated him and loved him at the same time.

"When did you get home?"

Izzie shrugged, decided it was best not to look at Dawson, and checked his watch. "Forty minutes ago."

"Oh... I didn't hear anyone come in. I must have really been sleeping hard."

"You were doing something, that's for sure," Izzie stated rather passive-aggressively, and saying it brought back the anger and the hurt. His eyes filled with tears once more. Izzie blinked them away before looking at Dawson again. "Is it better with her than it is with me?"

"What are you talk--"

"Don't play dumb," Izzie sighed. "We both know what you were doing upstairs and the reason for you not to hear me and the girls come home."

"Shit. Izzie, I'm sorry. I didn't think--"

“You didn’t think I would find out? And that makes it okay?” He stared at his husband, waiting, almost daring Dawson to say something. When he didn’t, Izzie continued. “How long have you been cheating on me?”

Dawson let out a sigh. He pulled out the chair beside Izzie and went to take his hand. Izzie pulled away. He didn’t want Dawson to touch him any more than he wanted to fall into his arms and be held. Not only was Dawson his husband and the love of his life, but he was also Izzie’s best friend. They had eighteen years of baggage between them; good and bad.

“Don’t do that,” Dawson tried again. “Let me explain.”

“Do what? Be mad? I have every right to be mad, Dawson!” Izzie exploded quietly, he didn’t want to wake the kids. Izzie put his head in his hands and stared at the table. “I just... I don’t understand how this happened... I’m a good husband, aren’t I?”

“God, Izzie, yes,” Dawson succeeded in grabbing his hand this time. Izzie let him. “You’re incredible--”

“Then what happened?” Izzie cut him off because he knew if Dawson started rhyming off all the great things about him he would lose his hard casing and cave like the softie that he was. “Why did this happen?”

Dawson turned his dark eyes down to the table and let go of Izzie’s hand. He knew this wasn’t a good sign. He wasn’t going to like this answer.

“When you were sick.”

“Jesus, Dawson,” Izzie sighed, defeated by hearing that. It was worse than he had imagined.

“I know, it was awful. I’m so sorry, Izzie. It was only supposed to be one time,” Dawson began defending himself. “You were so sick, and I was so busy taking care of you, and Ashley was there.”

“So you had sex with her? While I was upstairs dying, you were having sex with our surrogate?”

Dawson didn’t say anything for a long minute. Then he finally whispered. “I needed you.”

Izzie shook his head in disbelief. “No. You needed sex. You needed sex and it didn’t matter that it wasn’t with me.”

“That’s not fair.”

“No, it’s completely fair. You’re supposed to wait until your spouse is dead before you start tapping someone else.” Even then there was supposed to be a grieving period. “I think you need to leave.”

“Izzie...”

“Take Ashley, and go to her place.”

“Iz...”

“Now, Dawson. I think you should leave now.”

The finality in his voice had Dawson obey. Izzie had never been the dominant male in their relationship. The kids all regarded him as a softer parent. They knew they had him wrapped around their fingers and that Izzie would do anything for them. He was also the one who caved first. When Izzie got stern, put his foot down, or took over the role typically filled by Dawson, it was usually taken as a joke first until his temper got the better of him and everyone listened out of shock. Dawson was likely feeling that now as he walked out of the kitchen.

At some point, between Dawson leaving and the sun coming up, Izzie had gotten up and taken out the ice cream from the freezer. He'd eaten through a quarter of the container before he finally felt that sickening feeling of too much dairy overpowering the intense emotions he felt. His marriage was over. He'd asked his husband to leave. He was going to have to tell the kids their dads were getting divorced. That, and the ice cream, had Izzie making a beeline for the bathroom.

He came out shaking. The best thing he could do was sit back in the chair he had spent the entire night in. Izzie felt exhausted. He'd gone for tests. He'd taken the girls to see a musical. He'd driven home and waited out an accident into the wee hours. When he finally got home, he'd ended his marriage and drowned his sorrows in ice cream. What more could he do besides sleep? He wanted to sleep so bad but he couldn't sleep in his bed. He couldn't bring himself to do anything but sit there and stare at the ice cream tub melting while he considered eating more of it.

“Dad...?”

Jasper's voice brought Izzie to attention. He looked up at his eldest with a weak smile. Jasper wasn't a little kid anymore. He was fourteen. He knew about the birds and the bees. He was interested in girls and trying to grow facial hair. Was he old enough for his father to lean on him? Izzie shook that thought from his mind. No. He couldn't do that.

“You know about Dad and Ashley, don't you?” Jasper said, his voice quivering. “I'm so sorry!”

Izzie fell apart. “Oh Jaz!”

He left his chair to embrace his son. He held him tight while his son cried. This had not been what Izzie was expecting. He was supposed to break the news to the kids. He wasn't supposed to find out that Jasper already knew. Jasper sobbed into Izzie's chest. He held him tight. His hands rubbed his back and clutched his head to his heart. Izzie closed his eyes and let his own tears fall onto Jasper's brown, curly hair.

“I-I sh-should ha-have told you,” Jasper hiccuped into Izzie's shirt. “I-I wanted to. He m-made me promise!”

That was the last straw. Izzie might have been able to forgive a one-time lapse in judgment that brought Dawson to Ashley's bed. He may have been able to eventually understand that a man with a high sex drive needed something to take the edge off when his spouse couldn't perform. He could maybe even overlook the entire affair except... Except it was Ashley; a woman they both knew and loved. A woman who was familiar with their situation and the mother of all their children. He couldn't forgive Ashley

for sleeping with Dawson knowing he was married. He couldn't forgive Dawson for being unfaithful and forcing their son to lie to him about it.

Putting Jasper in the middle was unforgivable, and Izzie knew their marriage was over just by looking into the tear-filled eyes of his firstborn son.

