

Lobbied by Xanthe



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1999

Leo finished what had turned out to be a marathon long telephone conversation from hell and glanced at his watch - 3pm; no wonder he was feeling hungry.

"Margaret!" He bellowed. His secretary stuck her head around the door and gazed at him quizzically. "Is he free?" Leo gestured with his head in the direction of the Oval Office. It would be nice to have lunch with the President if he hadn't already eaten - and Leo hadn't noticed the flurry of Secret Service activity that usually accompanied the President going anywhere, even if it was just in search of food.

"Yes, sir." Margaret nodded. Leo grinned and got to his feet. He strode over to the door between their offices, opened it, closed it behind him...and bumped straight into the President coming the other way.

"Leo! I was waiting until you finished that infernally long telephone call," Jed boomed and then he glanced around, realizing, with what Leo could only describe as a lascivious grin, that they were locked into the area between their two offices, with both doors closed. "So, we really should stop meeting like this," Jed said in a suggestively conspiratorial tone. Leo rolled his eyes.

"We've never met like this, sir. This is a one in a million chance - that I'd leave my office at the precise time that you left the Oval Office and that we should both close the doors behind us before realizing that the other person was also in this..." Leo glanced around the small space. "Area," he finished lamely.

"Area...you're calling this an area?" Jed glanced around thoughtfully. "I would call it a

lobby."

"It isn't a lobby," Leo objected. "It's more like a vestibule - or even a cupboard."

"It isn't a cupboard. It could be a foyer I suppose," Jed mused. "Or a love shack." He gave Leo another one of those lascivious grins and moved closer.

"It certainly isn't a love shack," Leo protested, taking a step back and bumping into the wall. "That's just the title of a very bad song - it could in no way describe the space between the interconnecting doors of two offices."

"It could if the occupants of that space wanted to get up close and personal without anyone seeing," Jed said, putting both his hands on Leo's shoulders and holding him against the wall.

"You're assuming that the two occupants would be so unprofessional as to indulge in such behaviour in the office," Leo pointed out, noticing that Jed's eyes were fixed very firmly on his lips.

"Who's in the office?" Jed grinned, leaning closer. "Your office is there..." he waved a hand to his left, "and mine is over here..." He waved a hand to the right. "So we're in a kind of no man's land - an extremely private no man's land," he added in a tone of voice that Leo could only think of as a purr. "Where nobody can see us. No secret service agents, or secretaries, or body men, or senior staff. Just us. You and me. Leo and Jed."

"No!" Leo put up his hand as Jed's face loomed closer. "No, no, no. We said...we *agreed*, sir. No, uh, *affectionate* behaviour in the office."

"Oh come on, Leo!" Jed said, in an exasperated tone. "Damn it, I work with you every day and I tolerate all this 'yes sir, no sir' stuff from someone who I have, incidentally, been sleeping with for several decades. I put up with you always walking a step behind me wherever we go and opening doors for me as if I'm incapable of doing that for myself, so I'm just saying that when we have a place like this and an opportunity presents itself what would be the harm in one small kiss. Huh?"

He leaned in again. Leo put a finger over Jed's lips just before they reached his own.

"It could be addictive, sir. It might well be a slippery slope," he warned. "First a kiss then who knows what kind of activity on the, uh, floor of the love shack.

"I'll take my chances, Leo," Jed said, swiping Leo's hand aside. "I figure we're both way too old for the floor of the love shack when you've got a perfectly good hotel room waiting for us after work."

Leo rolled his eyes again, but somehow, when Jed grabbed his shoulders, pushed him more firmly against the wall, and claimed his lips with a passionate kiss, he couldn't find any more objections. His hands wandered south as they generally tended to during such moments,

and caressed the President's bottom through his wool pants.

"Mmm," Jed said, drawing back and grinning at Leo cheekily. "You know, that was a particularly good kiss, Leo, if I do say so myself."

"That's just because it was illicit," Leo observed. "You always find something more exciting when you think you shouldn't be doing it, sir."

"Why, Leo, you make it sound as if I regularly go around committing illicit acts for the fun of it," Jed grumbled.

Leo raised an eyebrow. "I'm not even going to mention your office in the Governor's mansion in New Hampshire and a rainy day in June," he said.

"Very wise, Leo," Jed said, with a warning look. "Well, this has been a nice interlude in a busy day. I'm glad we had this private little, uh, chat. Now - it's time for lunch, I think." He put his hand on the door to the Oval Office and turned the handle, glancing around the small space as he did so. "It's definitely a lobby," he proclaimed as he exited, with Leo hard on his heels.

"It's a vestibule," Leo muttered under his breath.

2000

"Sir, are you okay?" Leo glanced at the President who was staring into space.

"What? I'm fine...just remem..." Jed frowned. "How's Josh today, Leo? Is he okay?"

"He's fine, sir. According to the latest reports he's sitting up in his hospital bed eating jello and yelling at Donna down the phone. I think he's well on his way to a full recovery."

"That's good." Jed nodded thoughtfully, and then turned to gaze out of the Oval Office window again.

"Are you sure you're okay, sir?" Leo asked softly, resting a hand very briefly on the President's shoulder to get his attention. "I still think you came back to work too early. I could have held the fort here for another week."

"I'm fine, Leo. I prefer to have something to occupy my mind and you and I both know that you're siphoning off any of the really important stuff and handing me the mind-numbingly dull paperwork type stuff instead so that I don't overdo things." Jed gazed at Leo over his glasses and Leo shook his head, smiling at this all too accurate assessment of the situation. He gazed at the President for a long time. When anybody was watching, Jed was his usual ebullient self, making jokes about not quite managing to dodge that bullet at Rosslyn less than two weeks previously, and generally proving to everyone that he was okay and that the show must go on. When he was alone with Leo though, he was quieter and more introspective, and Leo knew it was only then, and when he was alone with Abbey, that he

let his guard down, and showed that the bullet that had hit him had wounded more than just his body. He got tired easily, partly because, in Leo's opinion, he expended so much energy trying to prove to everyone that he was fine, and partly because he was still wrestling with what had happened - and Josh was frequently on his mind as well. It was bad enough that the President had been hit, but Jed found it even harder to live with the fact that his Deputy Chief of Staff had almost lost his life in the attack.

Leo glanced back at the file on his lap and then back at Jed again. They were alone in the Oval Office, supposedly going through some of the afore-mentioned paperwork, but really that was an excuse so that Leo could monitor the President's condition. He was under strict instructions from the First Lady to keep an eye on Jed, and had a whole list of physical symptoms to look out for that she'd given to him as a condition of Jed returning to work at all. Jed was looking pale and very tired right now, but he wasn't falling over or bumping into things so Leo judged that he was okay - Jed hated people making decisions for him so Leo viewed it as his job to just be unobtrusively *there* right now in case his friend needed him. Jed took off his glasses and threw them onto the coffee table, then rubbed his eyes wearily, and Leo was filled with a sudden, overwhelming sense of love and affection for this man he had been intimately involved with for so long, who was struggling on so bravely after his world had been shattered by a hail of gunfire.

"Hey," he said suddenly. "Come with me will you?" He got up, and walked over to the door separating their offices, hearing Jed rise behind him and following. He waited in the space between their two offices and when Jed was safely inside, Leo closed the door behind him, so that they were alone in the small area together.

"Leo?" Jed frowned at him. Leo took Jed's face gently between his hands and kissed his mouth tenderly, gently, sweetly. Jed stood there, dumbstruck for a second, and then relaxed under Leo's familiar mouth and opened up. They kissed softly for a few seconds and then Leo released his friend. "What was that about?" Jed whispered. Leo stroked Jed's hair affectionately, gazing into his lover's eyes.

"That was because I almost lost you," he murmured. "And I don't think I ever told you how I felt about that."

Jed shrugged, a weary smile playing at his lips. "You didn't have to tell me, Leo," he said. "I saw it in your eyes. Why else do you think I risked outing us in front of everyone by kissing you in the hospital? It's been preying on my mind ever since," he muttered.

"What has?" Leo frowned.

"The way you looked that night. I've never seen you look that way, Leo. You looked..." Jed hesitated, and then reached out and placed a hand on his friend's arm. "Lost," he said. "You just looked so lost, Leo. You, Leo McGarry, the most able, capable man I ever met, and you looked lost. I needed to get through to you - to make you see I was going to be okay. I am okay, Leo. I really am - you and Abbey are going to have to stop mothering me."

"Not yet," Leo replied. "We almost lost you. So, let us mother you for a bit longer - for our

sakes."

Jed shook his head with an exasperated sigh. "Okay. But just for awhile or I'll go nuts with all this fussing," he grouched. He put his hands in his pockets and glanced around the small space. "Hmm, this reminds me...can I come over to your hotel room tonight, Leo?"

"Abbey says no sex," Leo reminded him with a reproving glance. "Not until you've been given the all clear."

"Oh for god's sake! Why do you and she *assume* that if I'm affectionate I want mind-blowing, earth-shattering, enthusiastic, and apparently life-threatening sex?" Jed protested. "I don't - I just...that kiss was very nice, Leo, and...well, it would be nice to have a few more. Even Abbey with her list - and don't think I don't know there's a list - couldn't object to that."

Leo grinned. "Okay," he murmured.

"And another thing," Jed said, a grin quirking the corners of his lips. "I still think it's a lobby, but it could also be an atrium, a hallway, a vestibule, a foyer or a porch. What it most definitely is not is a cupboard."

"Okay." Leo shrugged. "So, you looked up all those words in a thesaurus, right?" he asked conversationally as they returned to the Oval Office.

"Yeah." Jed grinned at him over his shoulder.

"And you've been waiting for how long to throw 'em at me?"

"Several months."

"I thought so - you know, we really have to find you something more important to do with your time, like, I don't know, running the country or something..."

2001

Leo gazed at the framed napkin on his desk, his eyes clouded with tears. He wasn't even sure why he was crying, just that it had been a very long day, and for awhile there he had thought that his own weaknesses had come back to haunt him, causing problems for them all, including the man he had loved for several decades. Then to come back here and find Jed waiting for him, armed with this particular present...Leo fingered the framed napkin, trying to hold onto his emotions. He knew Jed loved him, for all that they didn't generally tend to go in for sappy declarations of that love, but somehow, knowing that Jed had kept this napkin with its message for all these years and had chosen this particular moment to give it back to him. Leo bit down hard on his lip, trying to fight the emotions flooding through him. Today he'd had to re-live that moment, a few years before, when he'd fallen off the wagon, and let down himself and those he loved. His own frailties had been much in

his mind all day, but Jed had wiped them aside with this one gesture, reminding him instead of the bond between them, and how much he treasured it, reminding Leo of this amazing thing he had wrought; that he had been the architect of Jed's Presidency and that it was because of him that they were now working side by side in the White House.

"Leo?" Jed was standing in the doorway between their offices, a fond look in his eyes. "I thought I'd give you a few minutes alone but they're up now so it's time you came over here."

"I...may need a bit longer," Leo told him, gazing blindly at his friend through hazy eyes.

"Well you can't have any longer," Jed told him firmly. "Get your ass over here, Leo McGarry, and that's an order."

"You weren't this bossy before you became President," Leo grumbled, getting to his feet and wiping his eyes surreptitiously on his jacket sleeve as he did so.

"As a matter of fact I was - only people didn't tend to do as I ordered before I became President and now they do. I like to abuse that power," Jed grinned. Leo half-walked, half-stumbled towards his friend and Jed grabbed his arm, and drew him into the space between their offices, shutting the door behind them.

"I don't think this is necessary," Leo objected. "For a start, I think we're the only two people around right now, and also we have some clear rules about not being affectionate in the off..." He was silenced by Jed clasping him close and kissing him thoroughly on the mouth. Leo didn't even put up a token resistance - it felt too good for that. He wrapped his arms around Jed's waist instead, and just allowed himself to be kissed.

"I think we agreed, Leo, that the rules don't apply in this lobby," Jed said when he'd finished his thorough exploration of Leo's mouth.

"Vestibule," Leo corrected automatically.

"Whatever." Jed shrugged. "Leo - I'm not too proud to say that I wouldn't be standing here today if it wasn't for you."

"What, you mean *here*?" Leo glanced around the small space, a teasing tone in his voice, his tears banished for now at least. "In this vestibule?"

"Lobby." Jed grinned. His arms felt extremely warm around Leo's shoulders and his chest was a solid wall of comfort. Leo wasn't a man who allowed himself to be comforted all that often, but he had to admit that sometimes, just occasionally, it felt good. "It's definitely a lobby, Leo."

"I thought you said it could be an atrium, hallway, foyer, porch or a *vestibule*," Leo said, emphasizing the word vestibule.

"No, it's definitely a lobby," Jed grinned. "It has to be or I can't make my pun about having just thoroughly lobbied you; a pun, I might add, that I've been working on for several weeks."

"Oh god, well then, it's definitely a vestibule if I have to endure that pun." Leo rolled his eyes. Jed gazed at him affectionately, still not releasing him.

"So, I'm coming to your hotel room tonight, yes?" Jed asked softly.

Leo smiled. "Yeah," he said, resting his head momentarily on Jed's broad, strong shoulder. "I mean, as you're dying to know, I did ask Jordan for a date tonight but then..." He hesitated and glanced up into Jed's amused blue eyes. "Then I thought that maybe I'd like to keep the evening free in case someone else wanted to spend the night with me," he murmured. Jed grinned, and his mouth grazed Leo's gently, nuzzling and affectionate.

"Someone else does," he said.

The End

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