

Chapter 27 - Thursday Morning

“Teacher, Teacher”

Luis

Mike, Phil, Jason, most of both lines, and I were heading towards the main classroom building. The Brain Trust, yeah! Well, maybe. The crew that came in early during the season. Perhaps, the dedicated?

It seemed to me we're just a little too wired, especially after the intense strategy and tactics conversation we'd had in the locker room. I mean, no music!

“Okay, guys. Serious is good. But, we need to be loose, too.” Yeah, that's me, future Coach C.

Jamaal, one of our offensive tackles who clocks in at 6' 5" and two hundred and ninety very solid pounds, spoke. A rarity for him. He seems so gentle, until you see him ripping the head off a defensive tackle.

Hell, he knits!

Loves Shakespeare.

And Dante—God forbid!

And, bless my heart, classical music.

And Motown. The Temptations!

He assumed the pose of a bad actor pretending to think. Rodin would not be doing a statue of him in that position. “Serious. Relaxed. About like asking for a well fucked virgin.”

We all stopped and turned toward Jamaal. Not only had he spoken, he'd been funny. He kept his face a mask of relaxed indifference, showing no indication that he'd said anything.

We all had to hold each other up. Attempts to high five him resulted in more laughing, as we all missed. Yet, he stood there. Calm. Relaxed. But, an unmistakable grin in his eyes.

From the mouth that can quote Shakespeare with diction that Sir Richard Burton would have envied. And, quote he can, from memory, all of Shakespeare. And Dickens. And, and, and... "Yo! I think we'uns needs to get to class, y'all."

He had us in tears. And, he stood. Calm.

"Damn, you white boys are too easy. Dumb ass crackers." He shook his massive head.

Okay, I'm on my knees. When he did some "gangtsa sign" thing, it took all of us down.

"Shit. Don't knows if I can does this nekkid thing. Could I still wear my bling?" He pretended to admire some imaginary necklace, watch, and ring that were obviously huge.

Tears were streaming out of my eyes. I couldn't get my breath. I managed a look around. I was in better shape than Mike. Phil was using Jason for support and Jason was a bit shell-shocked. He had just been brought into the "inner circle" and had no reference. What he didn't realize, with Jamaal we didn't either! Still, he had tears streaming from his eyes.

"Fuck! Jesus! Jamaal... Wha...."

"You said be serious and relaxed. Now, perhaps, you are relaxed. We were just a touch too serious."

Now he joined our mutual support group trying to stand.

“Jason, so... what do you think?” I asked.

“Uh...”

“That would indicate that he's uncertain. Perhaps, he's had a recent significant emotional event that has upset his equilibrium. Should we suggest a therapist for him?” Jamaal sounded eerily like Dr C in lecture mode.

Mike managed a coherent breath. “Well, his sister-”

Jason woke up, before I did. “Yes? Are we getting to the serious part, yet?”

“Gentlemen! I insist. We must proceed upon our appointed rounds. These minor issues might be best dealt with on the field of honor. Perhaps, tomorrow evening?”

Together, in a group, we managed to calm down enough to walk towards the main building. The occasional snicker erupting, which produced a chuckle and a laugh, then back to semi-serious.

Mike put his arm around Jason and pulled him over to me, then put his arm around me. “Look, guys. I didn't mean anything.”

“Sensitive, right now. Okay, Mike?” I said.

“What he said,” Jason said.

“I apologize. Can we be cool?”

Jase and I looked at each other across Mike. We drug it out. Just when we felt Mike beginning to stiffen, we simultaneously said, “Sure.”

Jamaal's sonorous voice rang out, “Amen!”

Phil chanted right behind him, "Thank you Lord for this team..."

Chuckling, we entered the school proper and headed through the mazes of halls towards the grouping of classrooms for homeroom.

Still, the occasional snort came from at least one of us. We turned the corner towards the homerooms. The usual throng of students clogged the hallways. Yet, something was wrong. There was one clump. In front of my homeroom. The energy felt all wrong.

Suddenly, Jason pulled away from us. I wasn't far behind. Jamaal and Mike were my speed. Phil and a couple of others moved between us and Jason. Surprising me, Phil was keeping up with Jason.

Then, I heard Rosa's voice above the mass of noise. "No! That's not reasonable!"

And a gasp from Becca.

SHIT!

Rebecca

Requests?

Oh! The Program.

Shit!

Did I think that? Did I say it?

Naked. Shit!

Yeah...

Not one request, but two.

And from people I didn't trust. Rosa's here, so it won't be too bad. I wish Luis were around.

"Becca! Such news to tell!" Rosalee said running up to me, wrapping her arms around me, and gave me a solid, toe-curling kiss. One of Luis's Black Holes opened and we fell right in. So different from My Mountain, yet so sweet, gentle, loving...

I'm a writer. There should be better words. If my brain were working, I might find them. My brain... Oh, but the body is working overtime!

"Ahem! I had a request." Rashad has grown a spine?

"Yes, we have requests. Giiiirlz." Susan sounded so different than she had in the cafeteria on Monday. None of the bouncy girl on a high. Her bearing and her eyes were... hard. Feral.

Rosa partially unwrapped me and looked at the two requesters. "Are your requests for one or the both of us?"

"Her," Rashad stated, pointing at me.

"Well, well, well." Susan shook her head. "The two lesbians." A look of disgust crossed her face. "No wonder I was able to satisfy Luis." It almost looked like she wanted to spit. "So, both of you."

Rosa looked at me. I could only gape like that poor fish on the dock I had caught when I was five or six. Where is the air?

"What?" Rosa said. She was... relaxed, yet ready? The muscles and energy were totally new to me. Poised and ready to strike? Oh, shit! What is going on here? I need my "now" mind, not my artist's mind. Yet, there is an image here...

"Well, you must be lesbians. You're hugging and smooching with each other and your quote-man-unquote is no where around. So..." If this

didn't sound so serious, I think I would have laughed at her air-quotes.

"Not that it's any of your business, but we're not." How Rosa got that out while my mind was still spinning...

A voice in the back of my head said to breathe. I pulled in through my nose. It helped some. Before it seemed to stick in my neck. Was my throat that small?

"So, appearances and actions are deceiving?" The glove dropped.

"We care for each other a great deal and are exploring it." Rosa gave me a good one-handed hug letting me know her love and support. "I know how much she loves Luis. Hell, she spent the night with him last night."

"So, the virgin isn't any more?" Susan took a half-step back. Eyes wide.

"I should think not." Can you say tsunami?

All I could do was shudder. My eyes got moist. The air trapped in my lungs found a way out. Rapidly. Nothing more wanted to come in.

Rosa caught it.

So did Susan.

"See. She can't even fuck him. She's a lesbian."

"I-I..." My chest was tight. Why couldn't I pull the air in again?

"Shhh! You don't have to tell her anything." Rosa's hand gently rubbed my lower back.

"Well, that's one of my requests, for her to tell me about last night."

"That's not a reasonable request," Rosa said for me.

“According to whom?”

“Me,” Rosa said defiantly, she was only holding me with one arm, loosely, and was about in Susan's face.

“Ladies!” Rashad's voice cut through the building tension. “I have a request of Rebecca that doesn't involve questions. That might calm things down while you consider what's reasonable.”

“O-Okay,” I managed to get out. How, I don't know. Is this what it feels like when an elephant sits on your chest?

“I want you to pose for me.” He tried to look me in the eyes, but ended up staring at my boobs.

“Uhm. Okay. Now?” I started to move into the “classic” Program pose – hands behind head. How I did it, I don't know.

An act of submission to a stranger.

A brief thought ran through my mind about bringing this up at lunch. Then the feeling of needing to melt into the walls rolled through me. Before it paralyzed me, I heard My Mountain tell me to breathe, it was as if he had his arm around me and not Rosa. I managed to gulp in the first breath, shakily let it out, and begin to relax into the second breath.

“Not here. In the Art Room. I want to sketch you and take some photographs.”

“When?” I nearly had to force the next breath in. The elephant's girlfriend had joined the sit-in on my chest.

“After Art today.”

“We have the Pep Rally and The Nakeds are going as a group.” Why did I just lie? I'd like to go to the Pep Rally to support My Mountain,

but we hadn't agreed to a joint thing as The Naked.

"Then tomorrow, after school and before going to the game."

"Uhm... Okay." What else could I say? It was reasonable and the game wasn't until after dinner, even though it was all the way across town.

"Nerd-boy, is anyone allowed to this session?"

"I prefer to work without an audience."

"Too bad. I'll be there. Now, run along Nerd-boy. Us women have business." Susan gloated. "So, now, bitch. Answer my question. Are you still a virgin?"

"Y-"

"Don't answer her. That's not reasonable." Rosa gave me a supportive hug.

"She already did. Can't even fuck your man? Lesbian!" she spat.

"Y-You don't understand! W-We had a nice dinner. We fooled around and... and... I fell asleep." My eyes watered. The sobs came. I couldn't stop them. Yet, I found it in myself to stand there and stare back at this... girl. No woman, she. Susan wasn't going to win.

"And Luis was a sweetie, wasn't he?" Rosa asked.

"Yep. Tucked me in and snuggled to me all night." Damn, that was easier. The elephants must be on the dance floor.

"Yeah. I bet you'd rather have been with this slut."

"When I call myself that, I say it with pride." I felt Rosa tense.

"Slut."

I put my arm around Rosa and turned her towards me. It took a second or two for her to disengage from staring at Susan. "She's not worth it," I spoke from my heart to hers.

It took her a second. Then she smiled. "You're right. Now... now I have my mountain."

"Our Mountain."

"I think I found my own last night."

It took me a second. Then the light went on. "Mmm-"

"Later," she cut me off.

We hugged.

"See. Lesbians. They talk about guys while hugging and kissing each other. Where are your guys? Probably jacking-off somewhere because they can't get any from either of you. Or, maybe this 'Mmm' doesn't want to go where every man has gone before."

"Are the mice squeaking?" Rosa asked as she looked all around except where Susan was and waving her hand in front of her face as if bothered by gnats.

"Okay, Slut and Virgin. I have a request. I want you to kiss and play with each other."

"Nope," Rosa said simply. The hug she gave me was telling me to 'watch this!'

"You will or we're going to the office right now." In my mind, I pictured Susan stomping her foot.

"It is not a reasonable request."

"I agree with Rosalee."

"Well, I say it is."

"It is not reasonable to require a person in the Program to interact sexually with another person. You can ask us to pose, we've gone above and beyond and answered some personal questions, so you can take this request and-"

A gave Rosa a hug with my arm. "Don't step down to her level."

I don't know where that came from, but it felt right. It sounded like something My Mountain would say. The elephants must have decided to sit this song out. I felt the warmth I feel when in his cave.

Susan smiled. "Then, bend over and spread yourself open," she said while pointing at me.

As the breath left my body in a most unpleasant way, "T-That's... reasonable."

"Yeah, it is. It sucks, but it is reasonable." Rosa gave me one last squeeze, then took my hand to support me as I did this.

"Ah, isn't that nice. The lesbian lovers supporting each other."

"Friends, something you'd know nothing about," Rosa stated while giving my hand a squeeze.

I bent and took my hand back from Rosa and spread my ass cheeks. God, was this humiliating. But, it is an example of an acceptable request in the Program pamphlet.

"Nice. But, I don't see a hymen. So, you two play with dildos?"

"Luis broke it on Monday. At her request. Not that you needed to know that-"

“Don’t, Rosa.” I managed to cut off her pejorative. I didn’t need her sinking down to Susan’s level right now. What was making Susan do this? She had always seemed like a nice person.

“Isn’t that sweet.” She paused, leaving me bent over showing myself to the world. I know the redness in my face wasn’t just from my head being down, but the crowd that had gathered behind me, staring at my privates. Privates. Yeah. They were pretty public at the moment.

“Slut, why don’t you see if he did a good job and got all of it.”

“Is that a request?”

“Yes. Do it.”

“No! That’s not reasonable!”

My lungs finally worked as they sucked in air. Why wouldn’t those stupid elephants charge Susan???

Luis

“Gentlemen!” Coach MacFarland said in his most measured voice. It froze all of us except Jason, who Phil grabbed and turned him towards the Coach. “You three,” he pointed at me, Mike, and Jason, “in here. Jamaal and Phil, you two go and monitor the situation. If action is needed, sound out. There are teachers ready. The rest of you, homerooms. Now.”

In my mind, I heard a special play called and had to perform. Mike did as well. We had to “assist” Jason. He’s young. Doesn’t know all the plays in the Book yet.

Once in the room, Coach gave us each a hard look. One at a time, until he was assured we had his undivided attention. “Gentlemen. I

know emotions are running strong at the moment. You will be free to attend to the needs of your loved ones in a moment. Before that, I want absolute assurance that you will not do something stupid." He looked us all down again. "Stupid is something that would a) get you kicked out of school, b) suspended from school, and/or c) in deep shit with your loved ones."

"But-" Jason started. I wasn't surprised when my hand met Mike's at the back of Jason's head, although it did reduce the impact of my slap.

"This is Thursday. We've been expecting some problems with the Program. Right now, there are teachers in every doorway. Out of sight, yes, but ready. The last thing we need is for you gentlemen to step into a situation and react inappropriately. I know you're all keyed up. East is tomorrow. I've been building you up for it. You're ready. Too ready to walk into that hallway right now."

Mike and I were slightly swaying as we dropped further into our centers. Our feet planting, knees bending, and roots growing into the ground. Jason was swaying slightly with us, but he was coming up onto the balls of his feet. Mike and I were the Rhinos. Jason was the lion. We were all getting ready for battle.

"Now," Coach Mac continued, "I don't want to ruin what we've done getting ready for this game. I also don't want problems with loved ones. You want to protect them. That is admirable. Commendable. Now, listen carefully." He paused and drew us into his eyes again. About like when he grabs our face masks during a game to make sure he has our undivided attention. "You have friends and supporters out there right now dealing with it. You need to be ready to comfort, not confront. In this moment. Tomorrow, I need you to confront. Got it?"

'Breathe!' my inner voice said. Mike looked across Jason to me and we nodded. "Yes, Coach!" we said together.

Jason was still in attack mode. Another joint hand slap to the back of his head and he finally said, "Yes, Coach."

Coach Mac just stared at Jason for a minute and he seemed to shrink between Mike and me.

Jamaal's deep tenor voice rang through the halls, "Coach!"

Before any of us could move, Coach Mac barked, "Sit! Against the wall, asses on the floor!"

And we did. Although it appeared that Jason sat with us, I'm positive that Mike and I pulled him down.

"Don't move," he barked again and went out the door.

Okay, Einstein! Curse him! He hit again. This was the opposite of the pretty girl on the bench or kissing Becca. This was waiting for the bus at night, alone, wanting to kiss Becca. Fog rolling in. Being naked in public... Oh, I am. Damn. This sucks.

If being naked is supposed to make me feel powerless then it's working. What the hell is it teaching me? To be singled out, made to parade myself around. Accessible to anyone wanting to touch me. Distracting me? Yes, Becca and I got together, I think, because of it. But, is the rest worth it? The rest of my life is resting on some decisions coming out of this week. Just now, one finger squeezing too hard on the trigger of my emotions and no scholarship, no college, no coaching, no PhD, no whatever!

Being Nekkid is teaching me what?

I looked around at Mike and Jason. They looked as confused, angry, and agitated as I did. Jason was approaching wild fury, actually. Mike was a bit more restrained. Shit. No wonder Coach had us on the wall. If I looked like they did... Oh. Shit.

"Mike. Jason. Chill."

"What?!?" Mike growled. I've faced him across the line for nearly seven years in practices and scrimmages. This was not a look I

wanted to see on any offensive lineman in school. Death first, pieces to be accounted for later. Not conducive to calm, rational discussion.

“Fuck you!” Jason expelled through clinched teeth.

Why me?

Why now?

Well, Coach, now it is time to begin to be one. Shit. Can I have a bit more time? Let me get through this week. Except, now, my new girlfriend is being abused in the hallway. Her new girlfriend is in trouble. My best friend on the team is... Whoa! He's hooked on Rosalee! Damn! That's a good thing. But... But... Oh shit.

Jason and his sister.

East.

FUCK!

Breathe, asshole. Breathe.

If only I could stand and do the Short Yang T'ai Ch'i form. Hell, the opening sequence as a Walking Meditation. Anything to pull these demons out of my head.

Only, I need to deal with those around me. Be stronger.

Right. Sure. No problem. Let me just wave this magic wand. Oops. Don't have one.

I'm ready to pound people into the fucking pavement. Tackle everyone and then sort out who has the ball.

Chill myself. Breathe!

At least we're disciplined enough to follow Coach's orders.

Except Mike keeps pushing Jason down, subtly. Shit.

“Guys. We need to trust our coaches.” Well, that went over well. Something about replacing helium with lead in a balloon.

Mike barely had Jason calmed down again and sitting when Coach McFarlan's voice came rumbling through the doorway, “Contadino! Out here now!”

There was a tangle of arms and words as I got up. I paid about as much attention as when hitting a tackling dummy. My goal was in my head and, therefore, in my body. Air didn't even get in my way out the door.

I still possessed enough of my senses to keep from bowling Coach McFarlan over. He was standing just outside the door, blocking the hallway, waiting for me.

“Contadino, I need you to relax. Everything is fine. You need to calmly, I repeat-calmly, support your girlfriend. And, DO NOT GET INTO ANY TROUBLE. Got it?”

“Yes sir.”

He stared hard into my eyes and finally let me pass. A fraction of a millionth of a second later, I had my arms around Becca. Instantly, an upset girl was trying to crawl into my lap, although I was standing up. Rosalee gave me a huge and whispered, “It's okay. Just a bad moment. I know you'll take care of her.”

To my surprise, she walked away, headed towards the classroom where we had been sequestered. I guess it wasn't a surprise, really. That thought disappeared as soon as I realized my chest was wet.

Rebecca

His arms felt wonderful around me. So safe. So... Oops. I'm trying to crawl into my cave and he's standing up!

"Let's go to homeroom, then we can cuddle and you can tell me all about it." He sounded loving, yet there was tension all through him.

In less than a heartbeat, we were in our classroom and I was in his lap. God! This feels good. But...

"My Mountain? Why are you so tense?"

"We knew something was going on when we came in from the Gym, but Coach intercepted us and herded us into an empty classroom..."

"Oh! Was Jason with you?"

"And Mike. Coach sent Jamaal and Phil to make sure everything was okay. What happened?"

"Damned requests and a bitch named Susan." Was that me that said that? Yep. It was. And, it felt damned good to release that. Shit! I've been crying. I hate the Program.

"What? What request?" I could feel every muscle in My Mountain. There was no velvet over the granite today. Just a layer of steel.

"At first, it was personal questions, then having Rosa and I play with each other, then... Oh! I wanted to smack her!"

"Rosa... Why did she take off so quick?"

"Mike." I looked up into his eyes. I could see the second he got it.

"Mike!"

"After Media Day. They spent the evening together." I saw his

eyebrows go up. "No. Talk. Getting to know each other. She's a goner with him. Did he say anything?"

"Ahm... Maybe. We talked about the game this morning. He did seem distracted about something though. And, when we came in the door and heard you and her, he took off as fast as Jason and I did."

"Awww! That's sweet. The three of you were going to defend our honor?" Damn! When did I start giggling? The look on his face was precious, though.

Before he could recover, the announcements started.

Before spending time with Luis this week, I had never really considered the quality of sound reproduction. And, now, I realized that the school's PA system had a similar quality to using driveway chalk for a delicate drawing.

It did manage to convey the usual stuff about lunch, substitutes, and warnings to be good little children and not play with thermonuclear devices—at least that's what I think it said.

Then a reminder about the Pep Rally after school and the game tomorrow night. Another Naked dropped a piece of paper off for us. I know it was a Naked, because I saw a swinging penis go by. I guess I'm so used to this that I didn't even look up. Nor stare. Much.

Luis picked it up and read it. "It's directions to Shirley's party Saturday night. Are we going?"

"Is this a request for date?"

"I-I... Uhm..."

"Gotcha!"

DAMN! He knows all my tickles spots. It's cruel and unusual punishment! Where's the ACLU when I need them?

As quickly as the attack had begun, it ended. His arms cradled me and I instantly felt like I was in My Cave again. Peace.

The ACLU. Yeah, where are they where the Program is concerned?

The last announcement was about the concert on Sunday night. Encouraging us all to attend, of course. Bets on how many will be at the away football game and how many will be at the concert?

A few seconds of Cave Time later, it was time to go to my first class. We left hand-in-hand and walked into Rush Hour in the halls. As the requests started, my mind saw a new painting. Just the ghost of it. No details, that's normal. I knew it would just bounce around my head until it was ready for my attention, then I'd better find a canvas.

With a hug and a kiss, My Mountain dropped me off at my classroom. With the morning still running through my head, the painting percolating, I managed a hug back and walked into class.

Almost to my seat, "Miss Davis?"

I turned and saw Ms. Carlisle standing next to a chair at the front of the room and pointing to it.

Oh Shit! Biology. Fair game in the Program.

"Rebecca, Becky, are you willing to be a live model for class?"

"Ma'am, not really."

"Why?" She looked really concerned.

"This morning I had to face requests getting out of control. I'm still shaken up from it." Why was my heart beating so hard? I know she could compel me. Per the rules, all requests from teachers were "reasonable."

“Do we need to talk about it? I mean, as the Program Sponsor to one of the participants?”

“At lunch, please?”

“I understand. Are you willing to share some of your experiences with the class today?”

“Could we tomorrow? This morning is still a bit fresh and I haven't even sorted it all out.”

“See if you can sort it out by this afternoon.” I had forgotten about Health class.

“Promise.”

“Take your normal seat, then.”

The rest of class was a blur as requests, Susan, My Mountain, and shadows of a painting all paraded across my mind. Luis called it the Monkey brain. Apt.

Luis

Calculus was, well... Calculus. It seems so simple when you get the basics of integrals and derivatives. It's only when you throw in logarithms and such that it gets really strange. It's a good thing I had already taught myself most of this a few years earlier when I needed it to go through the Feynman Physics Lectures.

“Mr. Contadino. Would you care to show the solution to this problem?” Mr. Singh asked, pulling me from my chattering brain.

“Ah, sure.” I went to the board and slowly worked through a triple integral using natural logarithms. After finishing and getting a nod

that I was correct, I went back to my seat. Requests came back to my mind. I couldn't meditate out of this, it kept coming back. My spiritual teachers had all told me that when this happens, don't ignore it. Solve it.

Great. Another f'ing thing on my plate. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It is becoming litany this week.

Shit.

Requests... Crap. How did I feel about them?

So far this week, I really hadn't noticed too many. The ones I have, they've been... interesting. And... they've been... distracting? Best word for it. Maybe not unpleasant except it drew my attention away from Becca.

What about when someone made a request of Becca? How did I really feel?

Tested? I mean, I don't own her. I really have no claim to her. We've connected, but made no promises. We've discussed and agreed to nothing about our relationship. Yet... Yet... Yeah. How did she feel about them?

Will's move enraged me. Then I managed to calm down and find my compassion. Well, after being reminded by Dr. C and the Coaches. There was still a tinge of burn in my muscles from that lesson.

I'm concerned about Rashad's intent. His energy just feels all wrong. Thankfully, he hasn't been around lately. But, she does see him in art. I'm sure Francesca will take care of her, though.

"Mr. Contadino? Did you get that?" Mr. Singh asked.

I quickly looked at the board. No sense in looking at my notes, I hadn't been taking any. Nope. No clues what he is talking about. Confession is good for the soul, so they say.

"Ahm... No."

"I am disappointed Mr. Contadino. Perhaps some extra work would pull you back into the classroom?"

"I'm sorry, sir. Just a lot on my mind this week."

"This is such a departure from your norm, even facing a big game. I presume this has to do with the Program?"

"Yes sir. Very much. As a matter of fact, so much, that I'm having trouble even focusing on tomorrow night."

"It is a good thing you are ahead in this class. Do what as need for the next days. Back Monday?" I managed to nod my head. I do love and get confused by his accent.

The looks I got from others was... Oh! Respect. They seemed to understand! As a great teacher once said, when the student is ready, the teacher appears. My teachers seemed to be everyone around me. What the hell am I supposed to be learning?

"Thank you. I promise next week will be different."

"I hold your promise."

Amazingly, I got whispers of support and a couple of pats on the back.

Damn!

I finally found a breathing pattern that allowed me to relax my muscles. Damn, they had been getting tight. I hate it when my shoulders touch my ears. This morning's bullshit had them getting close to being able to part my hair.

"Mr. Contadino? Are you planning to attend your next class or are you going to sit here the rest of the day?" Mr. Singh asked.

"Oh. Shit. Sorry. Thanks." I quickly gathered my stuff and headed out the door, against the crowd moving in. Amazingly, or not, they moved out of my way. Just like I parted offensive lines. Was I that intense?

I tried to head towards Becca's room. I made it minus three feet from the door before the requests started.

One person asked and three grabbed Junior. My ass felt like there were twenty hands on it. My chest, arms, and abdomen were being fondled. Squeezed. Rubbed.

Was somebody fondling my toes? Crap!

I did my best to get out of the classroom without crushing anyone. The hallway was... the hallway - chaos.

Even with my height, I couldn't see Becca in the mass of humanity. And, that mass was paying a lot of attention to me. Well, to my body, at least. Not a single person was paying attention to the person that was me.

I'm sure the look on my face at the moment would have melted offensive linemen. Yet, five foot nothing little things kept making requests. Under the rules, I had to let them if it was "reasonable."

Shit.

What was reasonable was finding Becca.

What was reasonable was getting my game face on.

What was reasonable was doing well in my classes.

I'm sure more than one person was upset that Junior wasn't hard. Too damned bad.

I'm pretty sure right now he's smaller than when I run. A perfect male defense mechanism. Smaller target.

Her class was empty except for those streaming in. I needed to get to Physics.

Okay, to repeat a phrase oft used this morning, shit!

Maybe fuck might be better.

I hope my sweetie is okay. I still don't know all that happened, just that Susan confronted Rosa and Becca with some unreasonable requests.

Crap. What do I do? We promised to meet.

I walked towards her next class as fast as I could with hands all over me. Junior didn't even arise to the occasion, no matter what was done to him. After a bit, it actually started to hurt. I picked up speed and got my game face partially on, all the while scanning the hall for Becca. I got to her next classroom, English, and saw her talking to her teacher at the front.

I sorta waved, got the teacher's attention, who in turn let Becca know I was there. I got a sad smile, a small wave, and an air kiss. She looked miserable. About like I felt.

Mouthing "Later," I headed off to class. The ever present hands rubbing, squeezing, and occasionally pinching.

I've had more pleasant experiences having sandpaper rubbed across my chest. Not quite as bad as belly surfing on a lava flow.

Walking into Physics, Mr Thomas looked at me, all of me. "Well, I see you don't need relief. Hopefully, Mr. Contadino, you didn't sneak into the bathroom and take care of it yourself."

"No sir, I don't need relief. And, no, I didn't masturbate."

“Then why so shrunken and red, then?”

“Abuse in the halls.”

“Abuse?”

“Oh, sorry. My mind is elsewhere. Requests.”

“Well, take a seat and let's get started.”

Soon, we were deep into the wonderful complexities of Cosmology. Star sequences, black holes, and the wonders of gravity, degenerate matter, and photons. Dark energy. Folding space...

In no time at all, class was over and I was out the door like Jason hitting the line at full speed. Vaguely I heard Mr. Thomas try to warn me about my speed.

Anyone that tried to make a request was left in a Doppler shift. Near approaching a blue light shift and leaving behind a red haze. I got to Becca's class just as she emerged, head down, trying to be invisible. I picked her up and pulled into my chest.

Shit! She went crazy! Swinging, hitting, screaming...

*** End of Chapter ***

“Teacher, Teacher” by .38 Special (extra credit if you can guess my connection to the band)

Coming soon : Part IV (Thursday) - Chapter 28 - “Baba O'Riley”