

MADE IN THE SHADE

1979

Parties that lasted all night, didn't last as long for the guys enjoying the fun.

Bonfire on the beach, the orange glow on the lake a dozen feet way. The smells of water and hot dogs and smoke made the senses crave more. Cars were parked to the south, people dancing to the Boom Box, in the north. There were almost fifty people here ranging in age from 'don't drink that', to 'I'll never tell.'

Quinn took a sip off from the aluminum can marked Budweiser, thinking the beer wasn't too bad. And tonight, with the amount he had consumed, he might even be considered buzzed.

It was surprising how many kids came out to party on the shores of the Idaho lake this hot, muggy July. Jason had disappeared over an hour ago with a red head. Weir, Quinn thought, taking another drink. Jason usually went for blondes or brunettes.

Evan took a break from dancing around the fire with a brunette...and a blonde.

Go Evan, Quinn smiled. They didn't let the little guy out much, but when they did, they wanted him to have a good time.

Laughing, Evan came back and looked at his watch. "Where's Jason?"

Quinn pointed toward the parking lot. Evan's gaze followed.

"Oh shit. Does he know what time it is?"

"You want to go figure out which car he's in? Knock yourself out. Not sure he'll be happy you found him."

"Quinn-," Evan whined.

Quinn leaned over and reached in the ice chest pulling out another can, handing it to. "Have another beer. We've got almost an hour until sunrise. He won't miss it."

And he didn't.

Ten minutes after Evan drained the beer, Jason walked back on the beach with his arm around a pretty lady. He whispered in her ear and she smiled. Jason kissed her on the cheek and let go to let her wander way, watching as she swayed in a short skirt.

Quinn watched, too. So did Evan.

"All done?" Quinn smiled, turning toward Jason.

Jason smiled back and said nothing because a gentleman and would not say nothing,

Evan punched him. "You son-of-a-bitch. I hate your fucking guts."

"I know you do," Jason laughed. He looked at his watch. "Is there a reason we're not heading toward the car?"

Quinn checked his own watch. They were thirty minutes from home. "We're good."

Moving to the parking lot, they found Evan's new toy at the far end. The noise from the party dimmed but still called. Quinn ignored it and moved forward.

They headed to the car, a 1972 Challenger. Evan was teaching himself to rebuild. He had practice on a couple others, selling them when he was done for upgrade money and tools for the garage.

This car, Evan was keeping.

He even named her.

Peggy.

And Peggy was right where they had left her, but not sitting at an angle felt good.

Evan moved fast. "What the –"

He ran around the car, checking all four tires, finding the flat in the back.

Seeing a potential problem, both Jason and Quinn's gaze shifted toward the horizon while Evan knelt down in the dirt.

"I'm thinking this will fuck up our time some," Jason said.

"You have a spare, right?" Quinn asked.

"Yeah," Evan said, poking at a place on the tire. "I'm not an idiot."

But he was a kid who hadn't finished rebuilding his prize.

They got the jack, the iron and the other stuff they needed. Then the three of them stared at the tire with rusted so stiff that three super strength vampires couldn't get them to budge.

"What will work?" Jason asked. "What about Coke? I heard that once."

"It works but takes it days. And this tire is not coming off."

Across the lake in a breathtaking show of color Quinn he hadn't seen in decades, just the bare edge of the hill began to turn a light, meshing into pink.

"I think a Plan B is required," Quinn said.

Jason looked back and forth, then looked at the open truck. He looked to Evan and Quinn saw the wheels turning.

“Even if he fits, we don’t know if it’s light proof and certainly not heat proof. ”

“You’re going to put me in the truck?” Evan snapped. “You’re going to fucking put me in the truck?”

Jason tilted his head at the challenge and stepped forward.

“Plan C,” Quinn said.

Jason stopped and looked at Quinn.

“Options?”

“One of the other cars?” Evan said.

“All have windows,” Quinn said. “How about a dock, under it? A cave? Shit there’s got to be something around here.”

“I saw a shack,” Jason said. “It didn’t look welcoming but it had four walls and roof.”

“We’re out of time, Quinn said, pointing at the dawn. “Jason, grab the six pack.”

“It’s a five pack,” he leaned into the front on the passenger side while Quinn riffed the back seat, looking for anything that might help and finding nothing.

Quinn came out of the car, first empty handed. “Lock it up. ”

Evan looked at the horizon as they headed down the shore. “We’re not going to make it,” he whispered.

“There,” Jason nodded.

It was closer to the hill than the water, a wooden shack erected in some past to store ... who the hell cared. They jogged the distance.

Quinn pulled the door open. Jason, still holding the five pack, pushed Evan in hard.

Quinn pulled the door shut and secured the lock against any accidental openings.

“Fuck,” Jason muttered sitting the beer onto a built shelf that ran the length of one side “I hate adventures.” He picked up a section of dirty old rope and kicked at a deflated rubber raft. The place smelled more of mold than the lake water outside.

“Home for now,” Quinn sighed.

“I’m sorry,” Evan said. “I should of checked. I should of fucking checked.”

The tone said the kid meant it but then he always had been softer then the older two.

"You couldn't have known," Quinn said. "You're only had Peggy awhile."

"It's one night not planned," Jason said. "Maybe when we get out there will be a BBQ and another party we can raid."

They moved around, each actually sitting against various walls.

"Anyone got a deck of cards?"

"I spy with my little –"

Quinn picked up a piece of rubber and threw it at Jason. "Shut up," he laughed, not that he felt all that much humor. This was bad, but it could turn bad.

They found positions to sleep the day away. Jason lay straight out from the wall. Quinn, up against the edge. Evan near the back. Mere feet separated them.

"Quinn," Evan said.

"Go to sleep. You'll drive yourself crazy counting minutes."

"Quinn," Evan said again, this time in a tone that got Quinn's attention. He looked up from his piece of the floor and saw Evan, too pale, staring at the door.

Quinn followed his gaze and saw the pink sunrise poking a couple dozen breaks in the shed walls. He rolled, coming up to a kneeling position.

"Jason," Quinn.

"What do you want me to do about it?"

The place, less stable than they first thought, there were breaks and leaks in the walls. Pink/grey light shimmered in, thinking it was a welcome guest. Quinn looked up. A portion of the roof was gone.

As predicted, their bad just took one step into worse.

Quinn knew what sun and vampire could really mean. He had seen it in his past, far more graphic than they ever spoke of. His gaze jumped to Evan, the innocent who hadn't done anything to warrant the fate. Quinn's gaze shifted and he found Jason staring at him. Jason raised his eye brows and shrugged.

Staring looked at the roof, Quinn took off the denim coat he had been wearing, ripping it in two, then four. He tossed one piece to Evan.

He heard Jason do the same with his wind breaker and t-shirt, leaving Jason wearing his Celtic cross.

"Plug something that looks bad." Quinn pulled his shirt off over his head.

He moved to the largest hole while knowing it was that hole in the roof that would cause the most trouble.

Shirtless now, Jason shifted to the shelf that ran down one wall. Putting the five-pack on the floor, it didn't look like it took any effort to pull the wood from the wall. The plank was three feet by eight. Jason carried it to the other side.

"Get in the corner," he said to Evan.

"What?"

"Get in the fucking corner."

Jason checked off sharp edges and pulled some broken nails away.. He grabbed the sides and moved it with ease toward Evan.

"What about you two?" Evan sank into the corner.

"We're shifty," Jason smiled. He placed the shield over the sitting kid, then looked at Quinn.

"Is it going to work?" Quinn mouthed.

Jason nodded. "Should."

Quinn wasn't feeling less anxious.

"Now what?" Jason asked looking smug.

Quinn looked around. More light from big and small breaks peaked through. "I guess we dance."

The door was open a foot, but Stuart knocked anyway.

Travis grunted his enter.

The stereo held a stack of records, the sound turned down as not to interfere.

Stuart hated to be the interruption.

Travis had a final tomorrow and biology wasn't his subject.

"What?" Travis asked.

"They didn't come home."

It took a half second for the head to come up, the pencil to go down and Travis to turn in his chair to face Stuart.

"What the hell does that mean?"

"That means they're not here. They didn't come back last night."

Stuart checked his watch at the same Travis checked his.

Travis dropped his arm and looked at the covered window. "It's after noon."

"I'm aware."

Travis stared at Stuart straight on. "They went to the lake. That party."

"It was supposed to go all night," Stuart said, "but I assumed they knew to be back before dawn."

Travis stood up and walked to the window. Tension hit his shoulders as awareness settled over him. Stuart didn't think the final would be the priority now.

"We're stuck until dark."

"I'm aware of that, too," Stuart said.

"Did they say anything to you?" Travis asked.

"Not more than drinking, partying and picking up girls."

Travis put his hand on his forehead and Stuart could commander in chief taking precedent over biology.

"There is nothing we can do for a couple hours," Stuart said. "You finish in here."

"It's like living with a bunch of toddlers," Travis snapped. "We let them loose and the wreck havoc on everything."

"Hey Jason," Quinn asked four feet from his partner in crime.

"Still here," Jason said, hands in his pockets, relaxed in a way only Jason could achieve.

"What's with the red head?" Quinn asked. "You don't do red heads."

"I didn't say I did a red head now."

Quinn smiled and nodded with pursed lips. "That is true. I assumed from pasted experience.

"She was a good girl," Jason smiled. "We only played a little."

"You don't do red heads," Quinn repeated.

Girl questions were generally off limits.

But Jason wasn't going to bitch, Quinn knew.

"I found myself in the in the mood," Jason said.

"You haven't been in the mood for a redhead since 1947."

"Why is that?" Evan asked from his corner, still behind his shield.

"I don't like their pension plan."

Quinn knew what Jason meant. He had been turned by a sexy red head. Quinn didn't explain it to Evan.

"They don't taste good," Jason said, eyeing the ceiling as he neared an open spot.

"Bullshit," Quinn laughed. "You always said they tasted like strawberries."

He heard Evan sigh. "I've never dated a red head."

"That's because you've never dated," Jason smirked.

"I don't know, Jason," Quinn said. "He had that blonde and brunette practically eating out of his hand on that dance floor."

Jason smiled wide. "Ahhh, he's growing up ..."

He dramatically waved his arms, miscalculating the time.

He bit off a swear where he got burned, his face screwed enough to tell Quinn it was worse than Jason would let on.

"You okay?" came the voice from behind.

Jason smiled tight. "Peachy."

"It's 12:15," Evan said from behind the board. "I can take a turn out there."

"Evan, you couldn't even get one of spots without going up in smoke."

Quinn reached over without incident to grab, one beer, two beer, three. "Evan, peak out."

His face came out on the side furthest from light. "Catch," Quinn said. He rolled one of the bottles across the uneven floor. It made it to its mark.

"We are very short on beverages so make that one last."

No one complained about being cramped. No one complained about being hungry. No one even mentioned missing a dose of *Ace in the Hole*. Quinn figured they would be okay for one day.

Jason caught his beer and twisted the cap. "Warm beer," he said, taking a chug. "Day just keeps getting better."

"You think they noticed yet."

"Of course they noticed," Jason said. "Question is did they already rent out our rooms."

On the city streets, Travis sped a good ten above the speed limit. Once he made the turn past the broken wooden gate on to the dirt leading the ten miles to the lake, he hit the high beams then upped the gas.

"I was thinking," Stuart said.

"Why?" Travis said without breaking a smile. It was dark, with a distance ahead at a high speed and they both knew things happened.

"About where we're going to move next."

"We don't move for four years. Why the hell are you thinking of shit like that when we don't move for four years?"

"I miss the Bay" Stuart said. "A lot. It was a great place to live."

Travis risked a glance in Stuart's direction. "Alcatraz was still open. We could get a group rate."

Stuart felt his smile and it felt too sad. Losing people sucked. The fear in his gut hurt.

"I sorta remember it ending badly," Travis said.

Stuart looked at him. "Quick exit but we brought company. You think it's bad? What we have?"

Travis pursed his lips and didn't answer.

"We got Quinn."

"Walter almost got us," Travis said.

"Almost," Stuart said, trying to keep an optimistic attitude.

He liked Quinn. He liked Evan. If pressed, he might even admit to liking that son-of-a-bitch Irishman. The five of them had something. Conventional, but real. The knot in his gut seized a little.

The passed a sign reading five miles more.

But they didn't need the miles.

Three shirtless figures appeared on the left side of the dirt road, walking in the dark, their way marked by moonlight.

Travis skidded to a halt, lifting dirt into the air.

The three jumped out of the way, as Travis slammed the car into park and came out, his tall frame clearing the low roof.

A curse.

A cheer.

A sigh.

"Where the hell have you been?" Travis snapped.

"Don't even start," Jason said.

"Where's the car?"

Stuart reached into the backseat, grabbing three water bottles to hand off.

"Peggy," Evan said. "I didn't get to the tires and spare, yet."

"You had a flat?" Stuart asked. "All this was a flat?"

"We had a flat," Quinn confirmed before downing half the water.

“There was a shack near-by. Not a very good one but it looks like it worked,” Jason said.

“Damage?” Travis asked.

“Car needs its tired fixed.

“Couple sun burns,” Quinn added. “Nothing major.”

“You’re all okay?” Travis asked.

“Why? Miss us,” Jason smiled.

Stuart smiled back with an equal amount of sarcasm. “Enough to bring a broom, dustpan and three plastic bags, each marked with a black pen.”

“What?” Evan gasped.

“They’re in the trunk,” Travis said. “Figured we’d find a nice tree or a bush somewhere out of the way.”

They glared at them.

Stuart stuck his hands in his hands and turned to Travis. “I picked out the bush.”

“What bush?” Jason laughed.

“The thorn bush in the back that won’t behave no matter how many times we beat the shit out it when it causes us grief.”