

# Contradictions

By Brock Archer

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## Chapter 11: Changes

The house that Jay inherited from his parents, the house he grew up in, was certainly adequate for his needs, but he decided to sell it. There were just too many memories there, and even though there were many more good ones than bad, he felt that he just needed a fresh start. He decided to move close to Stanford since he would be spending so much time there.

Jay was not a pretentious person—his parents had taught him that. Though he could have

easily afforded a mansion, he did not need one, but he did want some amenities that he had never had before. He bought a house with a basement, rare for homes in the area, and converted it into an entertainment room, complete with a wet bar and a 50” plasma screen TV, which he used not only for watching TV programs and movies, but also for videoconferencing with scholars around the world.

Another compelling feature of the house, also rare in the Bay Area, was that it sat in a wooded area at the end of a private road, thus protecting it from nosy neighbors.

Most importantly to Jay, the house came with an Olympic-sized swimming pool, which was not really for him, but for his new “little brother,” Matt Donovan, who had developed a keen interest in swimming. Supplementing the pool was a combination guest cottage and pool house. Jay felt that he did not really need that, but it came with the house, so.... The pool house included a sauna and a steam room and, of course, showers—the kind with multiple jet sprays. There was also room enough for exercise equipment. That, too, was mostly for Matt, but Jay thought he might use it too. He would no longer be doing the heavy lifting that he was accustomed to at the shop, so the equipment would help him stay in shape.

Matt Donovan was 14 when his father died and Jay took him under his wing—about the same age that Jay was when Rick became his “big brother.” Jay had learned from Matt’s mother and his teachers that even though Matt had been well liked by the other kids at school, he had been somewhat shy. With the death of his father, Matt withdrew even more, and Jay knew that he needed time to work through his grief and isolation. Jay thought a little getaway might be good for Matt, so, before he bought his new house, Jay sent Matt to summer camp. Up until then, Matt had always been interested in baseball, but when he came back from camp, he had developed an obsession with swimming, which is why Jay bought the house with the pool. Jay wondered if Matt had had an experience like the one he had when he went to summer camp.

(It was the summer of Jay’s fourteenth year, the summer that he started working in his father’s shop. Mr. Sherwood told Jay that this might be his last opportunity to be a kid, so he sent him to camp at the beginning of summer. The second night at the camp, the Dempsey brothers came to his cabin and asked him if he wanted to see something they had found just off the hiking trail. It was late and dark, but they had aroused his curiosity, so he went with them. What they had found was their incipient manhood. The Dempsey boys were the only two boys Jay had “experimented with” when he lied to Billy Macintosh and told him that he had been with about a dozen boys. For the remainder of the camp, the three boys sneaked off every night after dark to go “hiking.” When Jay returned home, he brought back a fixation with the pastime. Now, Matt had returned from camp with a fixation on swimming, and Jay had to wonder if Matt had met his own version of the Dempsey brothers.)

When he wasn’t working on his degree or checking up on the family business, Jay spent as much one-on-one time with Matt as he could. He took him places and also helped him with his homework—not that he needed help since he was very bright, but in Jay’s mind it was not the help that mattered so much as just being there for him. Jay gave Matt his own room in his

house so that he could stay over on weekends, and he gave him free rein in furnishing and decorating it. At first, Matt played it very safe, but as time went by, he put up posters of his favorite rock stars, athletes, and buxom babes in skimpy bikinis. Later, as Matt honed his keen eye for the aesthetic, Jay even let him pick out paintings, sculptures, and pottery to adorn the other rooms in the house, and guests often commented that Jay must have hired a professional artist to decorate his home.

Jay tried to respect Matt's privacy, but the day he would see Matt with Chico from his bedroom window was not the first time he had seen Matt jacking off. Shortly after Jay bought the new home, he walked into the pool house one day to check on the pool supplies and surprised Matt as he was jacking off in the shower. Because of the noise from the multiple jets, Matt had not heard Jay enter. Embarrassed when he turned around and saw Jay, Matt immediately tried to cover up what he was doing, but Jay assured him that it was perfectly normal and nothing to be ashamed of. He told him about how he and Billy Macintosh used to jack off in the storage room at the shop. "But it's probably safer here," added Jay. "Go ahead. Use the pool house any time you want."

Jay encouraged Matt to join the swim team at school, and about a year after his father's death, Matt began to open up more. Jay fostered his maturation by hosting pool parties for his swim team and classmates. Then, he decided to take matters to the next level. Jay wanted to make sure that Matt got a well-rounded education, so he took him to rock concerts, but he also took him to the symphony. He took him to national parks as well as all kinds of museums. He took him to amusement parks and folk festivals. He even took him to the annual pow wow at Stanford.

Jay purchased a skybox at Candlestick Park for all the 49ers' home games, but he also bought season tickets to the San Francisco Ballet and Opera. The deal was that Matt could invite his friends to join them in the skybox, but for every football game they attended, they had to attend a ballet or opera first. Of course, most of the guys balked until Jay told them that the deal included the opportunity to go into the locker room after the 49ers game to meet some of the players and get their autographs. (The team owners were among the Sherwood Custom Furniture Company's best customers, and many of the 49ers had been represented in contract negotiations by Jay's attorney, Ed McClelland.) What's more, many of the guys found to their amazement that they actually enjoyed the ballet and opera performances that they attended, especially when Jay started giving them explicit narratives of some of the juicier parts of the works. At Jay's suggestion, they found that they could get extra credit for attending these performances and writing reports. Jay made a point of reading their papers before they submitted them, mostly to clean up the language. Jay also encouraged Matt to invite a different group of guys each time so as to give more kids an opportunity, but what he was really trying to do was to broaden Matt's circle of friends.

When the second group of guys attended their first ballet performance, Jay asked them if they wanted to go backstage to meet the cast, and they agreed—some enthusiastically, some reluctantly. (Jay's mom had been a patron of the ballet, and his dad had often loaned the company furniture for their sets, so Jay was well known to the troupe.)

The guys had noticed from their box that Michael Bartok, the lead dancer, was very muscular, but they were even more amazed when they saw him up close. They stood with rapt attention as he described his rigorous workout routine.

“I guess you’d need to be pretty strong to lift those girls the way you do,” said Matt.

“Yeah,” replied Michael, “and who wouldn’t want a job where you get to grope women the way we do and not get arrested for it.”

The guys laughed until Donnie Hawkins sniped, “I thought all ballet dancers were queer.”

“Yeah, right. And all teenage boys are virgins.”

“Since you brought that up,” ventured Adam Melman, “can I ask you a personal question?”

“Sure. Fire away.”

“When you’re holding girls like that, don’t you ever.... I mean, do you...?”

“Do I ever pop a boner?”

All the guys snickered, and one of them slapped Adam across the chest. Recalling what he was like at their age, Jay just took it all in stride. After all, it was a legitimate question.

“Did you get a hard-on watching us?” Now it was Adam’s turn to blush and slink back. “Don’t answer that!” Michael snapped, and the guys laughed again. “Come ‘ere,” said Michael, motioning for the guys to move in close. “I’ll tell you a secret. The truth is that it’s hard not to get aroused around some of these women. I mean, look at ‘em, and sometimes we bump into each other backstage when we’re practically naked. So, just to be on the safe side, I jack off right before every show and sometimes during intermission.”

“Sounds queer to me,” sneered Donnie Hawkins.

“Well, first of all, young man, only gay men are allowed to use that word, so if you aren’t gay, don’t say it. Second, some dancers are gay, some are straight, and some are bisexual—just like in every other profession.”

“What about you?” asked Donnie defiantly. “Are you gay?”

“I would tell you that that is none of your goddam business, but since my sexual orientation has been advertised on the cover of *People* magazine, I can tell you that I prefer women, but I have had sex with men, and I would again if the right one were to come along.” Putting his arm around Jay, Michael added, “In fact, I’ll bet there isn’t a man in this dance company—gay or straight—who wouldn’t leap at the chance to jump this hunk’s bones here.” If the boys had not paid any attention before to just how handsome Jay was, they couldn’t miss it now. Jay blushed, but all the guys just laughed. Matt laughed along with them, but in the back of his mind, he wondered....

Hoping to change the subject, Matt asked Michael again about his workout routine, and Michael surprised him by saying that he worked out with the 49ers’ All-Pro wide receiver, Willie Jones.

“No way!” exclaimed Matt, with echoes from his buddies.

“Yes, waaay!” mocked Michael.

When the boys, most noticeably Donnie Hawkins, remained unconvinced, Michael whipped out his cell phone. “Here,” he said, handing it to Donnie. “I’ll put it on speaker phone. Now, hold down the number 2 until it starts to ring.”

“Hi, Mike. Whassup?”

“Hi, Willie. I’ve got Matt Donovan and some of his buddies over here, and one of the little brats has a question for you.”

“OK, sure, but lemme talk to Matt first.”

Matt was blown away, first that Michael Bartok had Willie Jones on his speed dial and second that Willie had asked to speak to him. He was speechless.

“Matt, ya there? Matt?”

“Uh, yeah, Willie. I’m...uh. I’m here.”

“How ya doin’, buddy?”

*Buddy. He called me “buddy.”*

“Uh, great, Willie. I’m great.”

“I’m guessing from that the fact that you’re calling at this hour from Mike’s cell phone that you must’ve just seen the show.”

“Yeah.”

“How’d you like it?”

“It was cool. To be honest, I didn’t think I would like it at first, but Jay made it interesting, and we’re learning a lot from Michael.”

“Ah, hell, Matt. Don’t listen to Mike; he’d lie to his own grandmother. And don’t call him Michael. That’s his stage name. Call him Mike.”

Matt looked up at Mike, who just rolled his eyes and gave Willie the finger over the phone.

“I saw that!” said Willie, which brought another round of laughter from the guys.

“How are *you* doin’, Willie? It looked like you got beat up pretty bad during that last game.”

“I’m OK, buddy.” *Hot damn! He said it again!* “I’m a little sore, but we’ve got a couple of weeks off before the next one, and my trainer says I’ll be ready for Denver. You’re comin’ to the game, aren’t ya?”

“Uh, yeah, I guess,” he said, looking at Jay for reassurance, and when Jay nodded in the affirmative, Matt corrected himself. “No, I meant, yes, I’ll definitely be there. *We’ll* be there.” Matt looked at his buddies, and high-fives flew all around.

“Well, be sure to come down and see us after the game, OK. All the guys told me how much they enjoyed meeting you and how they hope to see you again.”

Matt tried to play it cool in front of his friends, but the truth is that he could barely contain his

emotions. He was ready to explode with joy and pride.

“So, one of your pals wanted to ask me a question, huh?”

“Yeah, Willie,” interjected Michael. “I was telling my new fans here how you and I work out together and help each other in our work, but one of these little assholes doesn’t believe me.”

“Well, Mike, I can’t say as I blame him for doubting you—(Mike rolled his eyes again. ‘I saw that!’)—but put him on.”

Donnie Hawkins took the phone gingerly, like it was wired to explode any minute. “Uh, hullo.”

“Hi, kid. What’s your name?”

“Donnie.”

“Hi, Donnie. My name’s Willie Jones, and I play football. I’m not as famous as my friend Mike there, but maybe you’ve heard of me, huh?”

“Fuck yeah! Oh, my god! I’m sorry! I’m so sorry! Please forgive me, Mr. Jones. I didn’t mean....”

“Relax, kid. Is your mother standing over your shoulder?”

“Uh, no.”

“Well, then, don’t sweat it. And my friends call me Willie. Matt! Can you still hear me?”

“Yeah, Willie. I can hear you.”

“Is this dude a friend of yours?”

“Well, I dunno....”

All the other guys laughed and poked at Donnie.

“Well, I’ll have to let you two guys work that out. If Matt says it’s OK, Donnie, then you can call me Willie. Otherwise, I guess you’ll just have to keep calling me Mr. Jones.”

Matt gave Donnie several quick jabs to his arm in a display of one-upmanship.

“So, Donnie, what was your question?”

“Well, Michael, uh, Mr. Bartok, uh, Mike, told us that the two of you work out together and that you taught him how to develop strength for dancing and that he taught you how to move more gracefully on the football field.”

“Yeah, so?”

“You mean, it’s true?”

“Yeah, Mike lies about his age, his conquests, and just about everything else, but that part is true. We’ve been friends for a long time, and neither one of us would be where we are today without the other one.”

“But, Willie...Mr. Jones (laughter all around, followed by several more jabs from Matt), Mike just told us that he has had sex with guys. Don’t that bother you?”

Willie chuckled, “Donnie. I want you to do something for me right now, OK?”

“OK.”

“I want you to step back about six feet from Mike. (Pause.) Ya there?”

“Yeah, I’m there.”

“OK, now I want you to look down just below his waist. What do you see?”

“Uh...I...uh...I...uh....”

“C’mon, Donnie. You can say it. You see his crotch, don’t ya?”

“Uh...yeah.”

“Well, guess what. He’s got on a cup and a pair of tight pants—pretty much the same thing that we football players wear.”

“I don’t understand...”

“Look, Donnie. There are dancers who are gay, dancers who are straight, and dancers who are bisexual. There are also football players who are gay, players who are straight, and players who are bisexual. We all carry the same equipment, and nobody really cares what we do with it as long as we do our jobs.”

All the guys stared at each other in disbelief and mumbled.

“What? You think all football players are straight shooters? Hah! Some of these guys would be wearing pink helmets with rainbow flags if they thought they could get away with it. There was a time when a guy could get killed in the locker room for admitting that he was gay, but nowadays, most of the players just say ‘live and let live.’ And that’s the way it is with Mike and me. He does his thing, and I do my thing. He doesn’t try to change me, and I don’t try to change him, and we get along just great. Listen, guys, if you’re ever lucky enough to have a friend like that, don’t ever let him go, ‘cuz they’re mighty hard to come by.”

By the time that Mike and Willie hung up, the boys’ minds were going crazy. They didn’t know how to process all the new information they had just received from Mike and Willie.

“It’s been a pleasure, guys,” said Mike. “If any of you ever want to come watch Willie and me work out or if you want to come watch the cast rehearse, just give me a call. And don’t worry that I might hit on you. First of all, I don’t mess with kids, and second, if I tried something like that, Willie would have some of his teammates pay me a visit, and I’d never dance again.”

As the guys were leaving, Mike pulled Donnie Hawkins aside and chatted with him briefly. “Did he ream you out?” asked Matt.

“No. In fact, he was really nice. He told me he was just ribbing me when he called me an asshole. Then, he invited me back and told me that the next time I come he would introduce me to some of the hot chicks in the dance troupe.”

After that second round of visits to the ballet and the football game, Matt decided (without Jay’s urging) that he could impress girls by including them in future outings.

Aside from the parties that Jay hosted for Matt and his friends, his house was always a scene of lively action. He occasionally invited his fellow grad students over, and he opened his home, including the guest cottage, to distinguished scholars who were visiting Stanford or attending a conference in San Francisco. Jay had grown into a devilishly handsome young man, 6'1" tall, broad shoulders and chest, beefy arms, slim waist, light brown hair, and puppy dog eyes. Though he could have had any woman he wanted, he didn't date much—partly because he just didn't have time and partly because he suspected that most of the women were really more interested in his money than in him, but when he did date, the lucky lady almost always ended up in his bed. Once every month or two, Dan Hammond would come over to drink beer and watch sports or a porn flick on the big-screen TV. He preferred straight porn, but Jay would sometimes slip in a bi-sex movie. Each time, he hoped for a repeat of that special night he had spent with Dan, but the most that ever happened was that they would end up jacking off a couple of times during the movie. Sometimes, when Dan had had too much to drink, he would end up spending the night, but always in one of the guest rooms, never in Jay's bed.

Matt loved spending time at Jay's house, not just because of the pool, the gym, and the other amenities, but because he came to love Jay as a "big brother." He looked up to him because Jay was smart, caring, honest, handsome, and, yes, sexy. After the incident in the shower, Matt had even gotten comfortable enough around Jay that he would sometimes go swimming in the nude. Matt learned in short order that he could talk to Jay about anything. Whether it was about sex, drugs, money, or life in general, he would always get a straight answer from Jay. When Matt stumbled across Jay's collection of magazines, the ones Rick had given him, Jay told Matt he could keep them—even the "explicit" ones. And though Jay's sexual exploits had not been as exciting as Rick's, Jay shared them openly. And, of course, Matt would immediately go to the pool house and jack off.

Jacking off was not the only activity that Matt took to the pool house, however. Being athletic, smart, and damn cute, he became very popular with the girls at school. During the many parties that Jay hosted at his house, Matt often took girls—sometimes more than one—into the pool house for a "personal tour." On a couple of occasions, Jay even saw Matt and one of his teammates take their dates into the pool house together. Jay kept an ample supply of rubbers stocked in a cabinet in the pool house, and he made sure that Matt knew they were there.

Matt also worked part time in the furniture shop. Recalling how much he had learned from working in the shop, Jay thought that Matt would benefit from the experience as well. He also felt that it would help Matt connect with his father's legacy. Matt took an instant liking to the work. Like Jay, Matt was very bright, but his talents were different. In addition to being a champion athlete, he had a knack with computers and a keen eye for the aesthetic. Jay arranged for him to take some classes in computer graphics and computer-aided design. By the time he was a senior in high school, he was the lead designer and was tutoring some of the other men in the shop.

Jay had hoped that Matt would go to Harvard, which he had been unable to do, but, perhaps

in a streak of independence, Matt announced that he wanted to go to Chicago. He could not decide, however, whether to major in anthropology at the University of Chicago or in computer design at the Art Institute of Chicago, so Jay put him together with a couple of faculty members from similar departments at Stanford along with an admissions advisor, and they helped Matt put together applications and portfolios that got him admitted into a joint program at both schools. Jay was fully prepared to pay the entire costs of Matt's education, but with his combination of academic and athletic achievements as well as his work experience, Matt was able to secure full scholarships on his own. Jay did offer to help Matt relocate to Chicago, and he promised to buy him a car for his graduation, but he suggested that they wait until they got to Chicago, and Matt agreed.

During the four years that Jay watched Matt grow into a man and prepare to graduate from high school, he worked on his Ph.D. at Stanford. Normally, getting a Ph.D. takes three years of coursework beyond the bachelor's degree plus at least one more year to write the dissertation. In reality, very few people manage to complete the requirements in that length of time, but Jay did. Having money helped. Oh, it was not that he bought his degree. Not at all. He earned it based on his superior intellect. But his newly acquired wealth allowed him to hire student assistants to run errands, type papers, and perform other time-consuming chores. He was also able to purchase research materials and tools and to attend scholarly conferences in his specialty. Because of his post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), he found it very difficult to travel alone, so he usually took taxis rather than drive, and when he had to fly, he always took a student assistant with him.

While in graduate school, Jay published two journal articles each year, his dissertation on the sexual adjustment of male adolescents became an instant must-read among scholars, and he was offered a substantial advance to turn that dissertation into two books, one aimed at a scholarly audience and the other intended for the general population. Usually, universities do not like to hire their own graduates, but Jay had established such outstanding credentials that Stanford could not pass up the opportunity to keep him. Immediately upon graduation, he took up residence as a part-time professor and full-time research scholar.

Jay loved looking out his third-floor window at the hot buns that constantly paraded across the quad. Stanford was full of hot babes and sexy hunks, and Jay relished the eye candy.

He also enjoyed the challenges of his new position, including the chance to mingle with other top scholars at international conferences, but he dreaded the prospect of flying. All through graduate school, he had taken student assistants with him on his travels, but they were not always reliable. Dan Hammond, who had become a good friend as well as Jay's financial advisor, recommended that Jay hire a full-time assistant. At first, Jay hesitated, saying that he liked the idea of helping students at the same time that they were helping him. Then, Dan suggested a trial program: hire a graduating senior to work full time through the summer and then re-evaluate the situation in the fall.

[Author's note: In Chapter 12, Jay takes on a new assistant, who takes on Matt Donovan.]