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Chapter 6

Morning dawned, not so bright and very early on Monday morning. The kids, anxious to get back to school had awoken before the sun was even up.

Liam, groaning, and telling the kids to ‘*go watch TV and let Uncle Liam sleep a little longer*’, just rolled over, curled into Jack, and went back to sleep.

The kids, much to their disappointment, did as they were told and plopped down in front of the TV.

An hour and a half later, Liam came downstairs with Jack following close behind.

Jack headed straight to the kitchen to start the coffee and Liam stopped to check on the kids.

“Hey guys, how about I make pancakes for breakfast, would you like that? He asked.

Not even waiting for the unanimous approval, Liam headed into the kitchen to start the pancakes.

When Liam had finished with the pancakes, he asked Jack to get the kids for breakfast, and then started setting the table with syrup, jams, butter and all the other pancake necessities.

When Cassie came into the kitchen by herself, Liam got curious.

“Hey Cassie. Where’s Jack and Chris, are they coming?” Liam asked.

Receiving a shrug in reply, Liam headed to the living room. When he got there, he was somewhat stunned to find Jack talking to Chris in what appeared to be angry and hushed tones. He couldn’t hear what Jack was saying, but he definitely looked like he was scolding Chris. However, that wasn’t the only disconcerting sight. While he was talking to him, he had grabbed Chris by the arm and pulled him up so that he was almost up on his tip-toes. The grasp had to have been hurting Chris.

“What’s going on?” Liam asked.

Jack immediately released Chris's arm and both he and Chris looked over at Liam.

"I was just having to remind Chris about the rules in my house. I don't appreciate backtalk when I ask someone to do something. He didn't turn off the TV when he went to leave the room." Jack said.

"Your house?" Liam said, looking at Jack. Then, turning to Chris he said, "Chris why don't you head into the kitchen and get yourself some pancakes. Make sure Cassie eats too, and get some milk for both of you too. I'll be there in a minute."

Once Chris was gone, Liam turned back to Jack.

"Your house, Jack? This is our place Jack, not just yours. We live here together, and now Chris and Cassie are a part of this family too. You need to take it easy on them right now. They've been through so much. Besides, they are only kids, you can't expect perfection." Liam said.

"Yeah, well, it was disrespectful of him to just walk out of the room like that and leave the television on. He needs to know what's expected of him. We can't start letting them walk all over us. I know how kids these days are. You give them an inch and they'll take a mile. Well, I won't have that in *'our'* house. Jack said, spitefully.

"Okay Jack, I understand that, but please try not to be so harsh. They need time to adjust. Their whole lives have been turned upside down and things are hard enough for them." Liam said.

"Oh and my life hasn't been turned upside down?" Jack asked.

"Oh come on Jack, that's not fair. I know your life has been affected to, but you're an adult." Liam said.

"Well, we're going to have to continue this *'lovely'* conversation another time." Jack said, looking at his watch. "I have to get to work. I've got several interviews scheduled. I don't know how I'll ever find a replacement for Michelle. She could practically read my mind. We worked so well together." He finished, as he gave Liam a chaste kiss, obviously still upset about their argument, and then headed out the door.

Liam watched Jack head out the door and then headed into the kitchen to check on the kids, who were quietly working on breakfast.

Liam got a fresh cup of coffee and joined them at the table.

It wasn't long before Chris spoke up.

"Uncle Liam, why does Jack yell so much? I don't like it when he yells." He said.

Liam was taken by surprise from Chris's question. They hadn't been yelling just then. Yes, they were arguing, but their voices hadn't been raised. Had Jack been yelling at Chris when Liam wasn't around?

Just as Liam was going to ask Chris what he meant by that question, the phone rang. Looking quickly at the clock, Liam decided he and Chris would discuss this another time.

"Why don't you guys head upstairs and get ready for school. We need to leave in about twenty minutes." He said quickly before getting up to answer the phone.

"Hello, this is Liam."

"Liam, it's Rick. Listen, sorry to bother you so early." Rick said.

"Oh, it's not problem Rick. I was just getting ready to take the kids to school. What can I do for you?" Liam asked.

"Well, as you know, two of our men were injured in the fire at your sisters, and Stacey and I were hoping that you would maybe bring Chris and Cassie to the hospital to visit the men. She thinks it would help lift their spirits. So, I was calling to see if you and the kids would be available to swing by the hospital with me sometime next week." Rick said.

"Sure Rick, we can do that. How are they doing? How badly were they injured, will the hospital let the kids in?" Liam asked.

"Yeah, that won't be a problem. My sister is a nurse there, so we'll just plan to be there when she's on duty, there won't be any problems. One of the men, Sam, was injured during a flashover. That's when the fire rolls over a gap because of intense heat. The heat was so intense, it actually melted his face shield. Mike, the other man, was injured when a large part of the ceiling fell on top of him. We wouldn't have even been in the structure at the time, but we got the report that the kids were probably in the house. Anyway, it would be good for the guys to see for themselves, that the kids are safe." Rick said.

"Well, I think it's the least we can do. Just let me know what day next week. In fact, how about we meet at Frankie's, by the hospital, for dinner beforehand and then we can head over to the hospital from there."

"Okay, that sounds good. Oh, and are we still on for lunch tomorrow? Stacey said that Mitch is going to meet us too." Rick said.

"Yep, we're still on for lunch. I'll see you, Stacey and Mitch tomorrow." Liam said, before hanging up the phone.

Turning to look at the time, he realized they only had about ten minutes before they had to head out to school. Heading upstairs, he quickly got dressed and then headed over to the kid's rooms to see how they were doing.

"Hey, guys, come on we've got to get going." Liam hollered down the hallway.

Glancing in Cassie's room, he noticed she had her shoes on and was trying to figure out how to tie them.

"Hey, kiddo, want some help with that?" Liam asked, as he bent down and pulled off her shoes.

"You've got the shoes on the wrong feet. Here, see this little curve in the shoe right here? This goes on the inside of your foot. It matches up with the curve on your foot." Liam said.

"I can do it myself, Uncle Liam. I'm a big girl. See, I dressed myself too." She said proudly, then promptly grabbed the shoes from Liam's hand and proceeded to put the shoes on herself, working to match the curve of her foot with the curve in the shoe.

Liam couldn't help but smile at her determination. *'She sure is a smart girl.'* He thought.

"I'm ready to go Uncle Liam." Chris said, suddenly showing up in Cassie's doorway. He was dressed and ready to go. In fact, he had his backpack already slung over his shoulders.

"Okay, let me just tie your sister's shoes and then we can head out." Liam said, as he proceeded to tie each shoe as Cassie finished putting them on.

When they arrived at Chris's school, Liam turned to Chris.

"Okay, give me a hug before you go. And don't forget that you're meeting with the counselor at lunch. You got your lunch money?" Liam said.

"I won't forget and yes, I've got my lunch money." Chris replied as he leaned over and gave Liam a hug.

Just as Chris was getting out of the car, the principal walked up.

"Hey Chris, we are so glad to have you back. Everyone in your class is very anxious to see you. They've all missed you. You better hurry though, before the bell rings." He said.

"Okay, Mr. Howard. Bye Uncle Liam." Chris said, as he ran towards the front doors.

Both Mr. Howard and Liam watched Chris until the doors closed behind him. Mr. Howard then turned his attention to Liam.

“Well, how’s he doing?” He asked.

“He’s doing okay. I do worry though. He still seems pretty quiet. It’s like he’s just holding it all in, and letting it build up. I keep expecting him to explode any minute.” Liam said.

“Yes, I can understand your concern. We’ll keep an eye on him today and will call you if there are any problems. I’m sure that the counselor will be able to help him start working through everything.” Mr. Howard said.

“That’s what I’m hoping. I really appreciate everything the school is doing to help Chris get through this.” Liam said.

Just then, the bell rang and Mr. Howard excused himself to head inside and Liam and Cassie headed off to Cassie’s school.

At Cassie’s school, Liam met with the Director of the school. He provided her with the paperwork showing that he was now Cassie’s guardian and she had him complete the necessary paperwork to update Cassie’s file. Cassie enthusiastically introduced Liam to her teacher. It was obvious that Cassie really like the teacher. She was a really sweet young woman who seemed to really enjoy the kids.

After leaving the school, Liam headed back home to get some of his own work done. After taking a shower and cleaning up the breakfast dishes, Liam sat down at his desk to work.

A couple of hours into it, he heard someone coming in the front door.

“Liam, you here?” Jack called out.

“Yeah, I’m in the office.” Liam called back.

“What are you doing here? I thought you had interviews lined up all day today?” Liam asked, hearing Jack walk into the office.

“I did, I do. It’s been a busy morning, but I’ve got a quick break for lunch. Listen, I’ve been thinking about this morning and wanted to say I’m sorry. I guess I’m just having a hard time adjusting. I’m so accustomed to it being just you and me. Anyway, I’m sorry.” Jack said, as he walked up behind Liam and started massaging his shoulders. “I was hoping we could go out to dinner tonight, maybe to celebrate the kids going back to school?” Jack asked.

“Mmmm, that feels soooo good.” Liam said, as he relaxed into Jack’s massage. “Yeah, we can do that. That would be nice.” He said, as he dropped his head back and looked up at Jack. “So, what time do you have to be back at work?” Liam asked.

“I’ve got a little time before I have to head out.” Jack said, as he leaned forward and started nuzzling Liam’s neck and nibbling his ear. His hands slowly moved down Liam’s chest to the hem of his shirt. He grasped the shirt and pulled it off, then returned his hands to Liam’s chest. Liam leaned his head back again so their lips could meet. Jack thrust his tongue in as soon as Liam opened up, their tongues mingling together.

While Jack’s lips were occupied with Liam’s lips, Jack’s hands started working on Liam’s nipples. First he grasped each hard nub between his fingers and tweaked them, working them so they were nice and hard, then he ran his finger nails over them lightly, causing Liam to whimper and his hips to lift up out of the chair.

Suddenly, Jack pulled back and spun Liam’s chair around so he was facing him. He took Liam’s hands and pulled him up out of the chair and into his arms for better access to another kiss. Liam started working Jack’s shirt off, then they both, simultaneously started removing each other’s pants. During this whole exchange, Jack was slowly backing Liam up until the back of his legs hit his desk.

Jack picked Liam up slightly and set him back down on the desk.

“You bring the lube?” Liam asked.

“Yep, I brought the lube.” Jack said, with an utterly devilish grin on his face.

“You dog, you came home just so you could get some. What if I didn’t forgive you for this morning?” Liam asked.

“I knew you wouldn’t be able to resist my charms.” Jack said, as he leaned down and gave Liam a quick kiss on the lips and then started moving over to Liam’s neck, kissing and nipping along his collar bone, then up to his ear.

“Well I should just toss you out on your bum, just to teach your arrogant ass... Oh, oh, yeah, right there, yeah.” Liam said, easily side tracked as Jack’s tongue slipped into Liam’s ear.

“Too late to throw me out now, otherwise we’re both left high and dry. Couldn’t have that, could we? Now, lay back, lift those legs and hold on, cause I’m gonna give you a nice ride.” Jack whispered in Liam’s ear, causing Liam to shiver and goosebumps to form on his arms.

Before Liam could even respond, Jack leaned down and consumed Liam’s lips once more and slowly pushed Liam back against the desk, sweeping everything in his way off the desk and onto the floor.

Liam could feel Jack's hard cock rubbing up against his balls and he instinctively lifted his legs to give Jack access to what they both wanted.

"That's it baby, let me see that pink little rosebud." Jack said, as he leaned down and ran his tongue over it a couple of times and then slowly started working his tongue in, working to open Liam up for him. Once he had Liam good and wet, his little rosebud almost swallowing his tongue, Jack started working one of his fingers in, then two fingers.

Liam was working hard to ride the fingers, but wanted more. "Fuck... Jack... Get that cock inside me, now!" Liam said.

"Mmmm, bossy, aren't we?" Jack said, as he lined up his cock and started to slowly work it in.

Liam didn't want slow, he wanted fast and hard, so he locked his legs behind Jack's backside and pulled Jack in.

"Oh, fuck, shit Liam, keep this up and I won't last very long." Jack groaned.

"Just fuck me." Liam said, using his legs to force Jack to start moving.

Jack, deciding it would be a losing battle, started working Liam's ass hard, slamming home.

"Ah, ah, ahhhh, yes Jack, that's what I need. Fuck yesss!" Liam hissed, as he grabbed his own cock and started jacking it.

"Damn... Uh.... Liam... Uh, uh, uh, I can't hold out much longer." Jack grunted between thrusts.

It didn't take either of them much longer. Liam, surprisingly was the first to shoot his load, his ass spasming in sync with his cock. This caused Jack to lose it too, letting loose a nice warm load inside Liam.

Liam sighed. "Fuck Jack, that was good." He said, dropping back and relaxing into a puddle of goo on the desk.

Jack leaned down and ran his tongue along Liam's stomach, slurping up his jism along the way, then leaned up further until he found Liam's lips, kissing him, sharing Liam's juice with him.

"Yes, that was good. Makes for a really nice lunch break." Jack said, as he stood back up. "But, sadly, I have to get back to work. I've got an interview scheduled in twenty

minutes, so I'm probably going to be late, but it was so worth it." He said with a grin, as he started to get dressed.

"Definitely worth it. In fact, we should do this more often." Liam agreed as he grabbed his clothes and headed to the bathroom to clean up before getting dressed.

When he came out, Jack was in the kitchen, just closing the fridge, apple in hand.

"So, let's go to The Cliff House for dinner tonight. I want to go someplace nice." Jack said, as he grabbed his wallet and keys.

"Steak, that sounds really good. What time?" Liam asked.

"How about seven? Should we go ahead and just meet there?"

"Yeah, we can do that." Liam said, as he walked up to Jack and wrapped his arms around him.

"Thanks for the quicky." Jack said, as he leaned in and gave Liam a nice long kiss.

"Mmmmm, anytime." Liam replied.

After Jack left, Liam couldn't help but grin from ear to ear while he cleaned up the mess they had made in the office. *'That was definitely a good lunch. That should be on the menu everyday.'* He thought to himself.

Shortly after two o'clock, he headed out to pick up the kids.

Cassie was first and it was obvious she'd had a good day. At first, Liam couldn't get her to leave. She was working on coloring a picture and didn't want to leave it unfinished. Liam finally convinced her to just bring the picture home to finish it.

It sounded like Chris had had a good day as well. He was definitely a little more talkative as he told Liam about his day.

"So, Chris, how did your lunch with the counselor go?" Liam asked.

"Okay, we mostly talked about what I did at school before lunch. We just talked mostly. You know, Uncle Liam, I wish I could have lunch with my friends. I mean, I like the counselor, he's nice and everything, but can't I just eat with my friends?" Chris asked.

"Right now, I don't think that's an option. I think it would be better for you to keep meeting with the counselor. Let's stick with it for a couple of weeks and then maybe we can change your schedule, okay?" Liam offered.

“Okay.” Chris said, his shoulders dropping in defeat. He was obviously not happy with Liam’s suggestion.

“Oh, hey Chris, we’re all going out to dinner tonight, so as soon as we get home, I want you to get your homework finished and then I want both you and Cassie to take your bath before we go.” Liam said.

“Okay, where are we going?” Chris asked.

“Jack wants to take us out someplace nice, so you guys need to be really good, okay?” He said, smiling at the kids as he looked back at them from the rearview mirror.

Later that evening, after homework and baths, they headed out to the restaurant.

When they got there, Jack was already waiting. He stood from the table grinning and waving to Liam as Liam entered the lobby.

As Liam approached the table, Jack’s grin slowly melted from his face and was replaced with a scowl.

“What are they doing here?” Jack said in a hushed tone, nodding his head towards the kids. “I thought it was just going to be us?” Jack asked.

“I thought you were inviting all of us, Jack. Besides, what do you expect me to do with them? Set them in front of the TV and hope the house is still standing when we get home?” Liam said, his voice rising slightly.

“You could have found a babysitter.” Jack said.

“No, I couldn’t, Jack. My mom watched the kids on Thursday and Stacey watched the kids on Saturday. I can’t just drop the kids on them when ever I want. That wouldn’t be fair to them or to the kids.” Liam said, trying to calm down.

“Yeah? Well, you know what, I’m not going to do this. I don’t have to do this. This isn’t my life Liam. I’m out of here.” With that said, Jack dropped a twenty dollar bill on the table and walked out, leaving Liam totally stunned and utterly speechless.

Liam plopped down in the chair, still shocked and not completely sure what had just happened. *‘Was that it? Five years down the drain just like that?’* He wondered to himself.

Cassie came up to Liam and put her hand on his arm, pulling him out of his thoughts. He picked her up and set her in his lap, hugging her close, and then pulled Chris to him as well.

Taking a deep breath, he said. “Well guys, let’s say we ditch this joint. Maybe we can see if Stacey and the kids want to have dinner with us. How does that sound?” He asked.

He was a little worried about showing up at Stacey’s unannounced but didn’t have her number with him. He was hoping she wouldn’t be too put out. He just really needed someone to talk to.

As soon as Stacey answered the door, she knew something was wrong. Liam though, didn’t give her a chance to even ask what was wrong. As soon as he saw her, he broke down, tears streaming down his face.

“Oh, honey, what happened?” Stacey asked, as she enveloped him in her arms. “Chris, Cassie, why don’t you two go see what Bren and Jacob are up to. I’m sure they will be excited to see you guys.” She said, hoping to get the kids out of the room so they could talk.

Once the kids were out of the room, Stacey directed Liam into the kitchen and sat him down at the table.

“Okay honey, what happened?” Stacey asked.

“I have to feed the kids.” He said.

“What?” Stacey asked, thoroughly confused.

“They haven’t had dinner yet. I need to feed them. We came by to see if you wanted to have dinner with us.” Liam answered.

“Well, first off, I really don’t think that’s why you came by, but your right, the kids need to eat. We’ve already had dinner, but I’ll order a couple of pizzas. Knowing my kids, they’ll still manage to eat a couple of slices.” Stacey said, as she got up and ordered the pizzas.

Once the pizzas were ordered, she sat back down at the table with Liam.

“Okay, now spill. What’s got you all upset?” Stacey asked.

“I think Jack and I just broke up.” Liam said, the sobbing starting again. “I just don’t know what to do. He doesn’t like the kids. He doesn’t want them there. He keeps saying he wants to try, but he doesn’t, really. I think it’s more that he doesn’t want to lose me. It’s just not fair to the kids to have to live with someone that doesn’t want them there. I’m sure they feel the tension, the hostility. Lord knows I feel it. But, I love him, Stacey. I can’t imagine my life without him. Well, I can’t exactly imagine my life continuing the way it’s been either, but we were so good together before the kids. I just don’t know what to do.” Liam said, taking a deep, shuddering breath.

“Sweetie, you can’t make him love the kids, as impossible as it would seem for someone to not love those kids, not everyone is cut out for parenting. And, you’re right, it’s not fair to the kids. After everything they’ve been through, they don’t need this added to it. I know it’s hard, but right now you need to think about the kids first. Jack will either grow up and become a man or he won’t, it’s his choice, but you can’t let the kids continue to be affected by it. You, on the other hand don’t have a choice, it’s time for you to grow up and become a man. You have the kids to think about. They need to come first.” Stacey said.

“Yeah, I know, you’re right.” Liam said, heaving another huge shuddering breath. “I guess I’ll talk to Jack and the kids and then start looking for a place of our own. God, Stacey, will my life ever stop spiraling out of control? I keep waiting to see the light at the end of the tunnel and every time I get a glimpse of the light, it gets turned off.” He said, snorting out a disgruntled laugh at the stupid analogy.

“I know it seems impossible, but things will get better. It’s not even been two weeks yet since the fire and the kids coming to live with you. You’re all still grieving, still adjusting. These are pretty drastic changes for all of you, Jack included. The only difference is that Jack has a choice. That makes things much easier for him. But, you’ll survive. The kids will survive. You and the kids have plenty of family and friends to support you. You’ll all get through it. Just give it time.” She said.

Just then, the pizza arrived and everyone gathered at the table to eat. Stacey was right. Her kids sat down and ate a second dinner and if she hadn’t told him beforehand that they had already eaten, he would never have known. They had hearty appetites.

When they left Stacey’s, Liam left feeling much better about what he knew he had to do. It didn’t make it any easier, but he, at least now he had a plan.

When they got home Jack wasn’t there. Liam put the kids to bed, in their own bed, and then went to bed himself, knowing full well he wouldn’t sleep, that he would only toss and turn, processing everything going on in his life, trying to figure out how to get control of his life back.

Later he woke with a sudden jerk, sitting up in bed. Something was wrong. He could feel it vibrate through his body and then he heard it. One of the kids was screaming. Screaming like someone was hurting them. Jumping out of bed and running down the hall, he could tell the screams were coming from Chris’s room. When he got there, Chris was sitting up in bed, screaming and thrashing around. His eyes were open, but he didn’t seem to be focusing on anything.

Liam sat down on the bed and put a hand on Chris’s shoulder, and then reached out and wrapped Chris in his arms. This caused Chris to go crazy, his arms started flailing about, and his screaming reached an all time high, forcing Liam to let him go.

Liam tried talking to him, but it didn't appear that Chris was hearing him. *'Was he still asleep?'* Liam wondered. His eyes were open, but it seemed that he was still asleep. Not sure what to do, Liam ran back to his bedroom and picked up the phone.

"Hello?" The groggy voice answered.

"Stacey, I don't know what to do. Chris is screaming bloody murder and I can't get him to calm down. His eyes are open, but he won't stop screaming or thrashing around. I think he's still asleep, even though it doesn't look like it. He's not responding to me, he won't let me touch him. I don't know what to do." Liam said, frantically as he ran, phone in hand, back to Chris's room.

"Oh Jesus, Liam. It sounds like he's having a night terror." She said, hearing Chris screaming and crying on the other end of the phone. "I've heard about these. One of Jacob's friends used to have them. His mom told me about them. There's not much you can do. He's still asleep, it just doesn't seem like it. He'll calm down soon. Just stay with him and make sure he doesn't hurt himself." Stacey said.

Just then, Liam heard someone in the hallway and turned towards the voice.

"Unca Leem, is Chrissie okay?" Cassie asked.

"Just a second Stacey, Cassie just woke up." He said to Stacey, and then turned his attention to Cassie. "He's okay kiddo, just having a bad dream. Why don't you go ahead to my room and get into bed. You can sleep with me tonight. As soon as Chris calms down, I'll bring him too, okay?" Liam asked, hoping to keep Cassie calm.

After he reassured Cassie and she was off to bed again, Liam turned his attention back to Chris and Stacey.

"He seems to be calming down a little. Shit, I think my heart is ready to burst through my chest, it's beating so hard. Scared the shit out of me." He said.

"I'm sure it did, but he'll be okay. He probably won't even remember it in the morning. Although you'll want to bring this up with the school counselor that he's seeing." She said.

"Yeah, I'll definitely be having a conversation with the counselor tomorrow. I'm sorry I bothered you, I just didn't know what to do." Liam said, feeling guilty about panicking and calling her.

"It's okay, you can call me anytime, Liam." Stacey said.

"Thanks Stacey, I truly don't know if I could have survived this last week or so without you." Liam said.

After he hung up with Stacey, Liam sat on the bed and ran his fingers through Chris's hair. Chris had finally calmed down. He had laid back down and finally closed his eyes. He was still breathing hard, his body covered with a light sheen of sweat and his hair was matted to his head, but it appeared he was back asleep.

Once Liam was sure he was fully asleep again, he picked Chris up and carried him back to his bed where Cassie was sprawled out, asleep again.

After getting Chris settled in bed, Liam crawled in with them and couldn't help thinking that the light had again been turned off.

Author's Note: Is everyone enjoying this story? If you are, drop me a note and let me know. Comments, good or bad, can be e-mailed to me at myoregon12@yahoo.com

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