

A NEW NORMAL

By William Neale

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Excerpt

When they pulled off the main road, Jake switched the truck into four-wheel drive because the driveway to the cabin was really more of a weed-infested dirt trail than an actual road. No regular car could have ever managed it. Jake explained to Cade that the owner intentionally wanted it this way to keep would-be intruders from knowing there was a cabin just over the hill. After about a quarter mile of rough and bouncy off-roading, the truck pulled up over a rise, revealing a small, rustic log cabin situated in front of an elliptically-shaped lake reflecting the mid-day's cloudless cobalt sky. Despite still feeling ashamed and confused about his earlier "problem," Cade was impressed at how postcard beautiful this place was.

"I gotta piss like a racehorse," Jake said as he hopped out of the driver's side. He stepped into the grass towards a group of bushes about twenty feet from the parked truck, turned his back, and started relieving himself. Cade was shocked that he would just do it like that out in the open instead of using the bathroom inside.

"Up here you piss wherever you want," Jake said over his shoulder. "Just do it away from the house or places we use. There's no bathroom inside the cabin but we've got an outhouse up by the woods and there's an outdoor shower in the back. That's it for facilities."

Cade said nothing in reply but he really did need to go. He turned and walked maybe twenty yards over to a large tree and with his back to Jake, began modestly emptying a full bladder. As he finished and turned, he was surprised to find Jake standing only inches in front of him. They were of equal heights and Cade could actually feel and smell Jake's warm breath. The closeness made him uncomfortable for reasons he needed to keep hidden.

"You've hardly said a word for the last hour, buddy. What's wrong?"

Cade stammered. "Well, it's kind of personal."

"Was it the fact that you sprang a boner in your shorts after I took off my shirt?"

Cade looked away, his face turning red. "I was hoping you hadn't noticed. I don't know why – I – uh – Jesus, Jake – I'm not gay. I'm not like that."

"Well what if you were?" he said quietly, placing a hand on Cade's shoulder. He stared directly into Cade's eyes. "Seeing what happened to you in the truck might well mean that you are and might well explain some things. On the other hand, it could have meant you're just seriously horny. But if you have some gay leanings, it doesn't make you any less of a man. I've thought for a long time there's a possibility you might be – I could see it in the way you looked at Mark. You didn't even know you were doing it, but I think you may well be in love with him. And from the way he looks at you, I have a strong hunch he's just as much in love with you too, even if he doesn't have a clue yet what his feelings for you really mean."

"That's not possible, Jake. We're just best friends."

“Yeah, and how many nineteen-year old ‘just best friends’ are inseparable twenty-four-seven and go into withdrawal when they’re not together? How many ‘just best friends’ dick the same girl at the same time? Think I don’t know about Tina and what the three of you do on Saturday nights? You two may be sharing the same action, but I’d wager what’s making you both get off is having the other ‘just best friend’ naked in the same bed. You know how else I suspect you’re gay?”

Cade looked down with resignation. “Because I kept touching the tattoo on your arm?”

“No, that could just mean that you really want one yourself, which you told me. No, the other reason I think you might be gay is how much your face lights up when Mark or I are affectionate with you. When either one of us hugs you or puts an arm around your shoulder, you don’t want to pull away. You just lean into that hug like you want it to last forever. Ever noticed that?”

“No,” he replied, getting ready for the bomb to drop in which Jake would announce he was taking Cade back home and didn’t want him anywhere near either him or his son anymore.

“Can you think of a different explanation, Cade?”

“I – uh – don’t know, Major.”

“Thought I told you to call me Jake.”

“I don’t know, Jake. You know my mom and dad have never been real touchy feely. They don’t hug me much or put their arms around my shoulders like you and Mark do. It just feels good to know that somebody likes you enough to want to hug you.”

“We’re Italian. Big hugs and kisses always. That’s how we show affection for people we care about. Of course we like you and, like I said, I think Mark more than likes you.”

“So – I’m not saying I’m gay ‘cause I don’t think I am. But if I *were* gay, would *you* still like me?”

“More than like you, Cade. Love you. Hell, Mark and I always have. We consider you a big part of our family. If it turns out you and Mark want to be together the way I think you both do, I will be overjoyed. Because the only thing I want for him and you both is to be happy. And you most definitely make him happy. His whole life revolves around spending time with you, Cade. Don’t you get that?”

“I just never thought about it that way, I guess.”

Standing so close, it was easy for Jake to wrap his big arms around Cade and pull him close into one of the buddy hugs he’d given him many times. “Don’t worry, Cade. Gay or straight, it doesn’t matter as long as you are true to yourself and true to our Mark.”

Cade sighed as he again breathed Jake’s scent – a combination of sweat and some spicy smelling soap. That, combined with the tactile sensation of Cade’s bare, mostly smooth chest rubbing against Jake’s very hairy one, made his dick come back to life – again. Terrified Jake would feel it pressing against him, Cade pushed back and released himself from Jake’s hold. *Did he feel it? Shit! What the fuck is wrong with me?*

Jake smiled but made no mention of the abrupt end to their hug. “Come on. We’ve got food spoiling in the back of the truck if we don’t get it in the refrigerator soon. Let’s unload everything into the cabin and eat us some lunch. And don’t worry, Cade. There’s nothing you can do or say that’s gonna make me like or respect you any less. I want you to take some time while we’re here to go off by yourself and think about what’s in your heart, what will make you happy, *and* what you intend to do about it. Okay, big guy?”

“Okay, Jake. And Major? Thanks.”

“For what?”

“You know – just thanks.”

By the time they put the groceries away, Cade realized how hungry he was. Jake opened a package of hot dogs and showed him how to fill the cook pot using the old-fashioned hand pump in the kitchen.

“This is really cool,” Cade said as a thick stream of almost ice-cold water poured from the spout.

“This is how people got their water back in the days before they had electric well pumps or city water,” Jake replied as he minced an onion. “The cabin owner never had an electric pump installed because the electricity goes out here almost every time a big thunderstorm rolls by.”

The two finished off most of the package of hot dogs and then tidied up the small kitchen situated in one corner of the cabin’s interior.

“Why don’t we put on our swimsuits and go spend the afternoon down by the lake?” Jake suggested. “We can get some sun, splash around in the water, and maybe we’ll even have us a beer or two.”

The lake was about fifty yards from the cabin’s back deck. To the left was a small sandy beach where Jake explained they could walk about a hundred feet out into the lake before hitting deep water. Just to the right of the beach was an area of flat rocks that made a good place for sunning.

“Just be aware,” he warned. “The water’s going to be pretty cold because the lake is spring fed and it’s still early summer up here in the hills.”

They plunged in like two eager kids despite the cold water. For the next hour it was the boisterous, goofy Major Vincenzo – Jake – that Cade knew so well. He thought how much Mark would be enjoying this and remembered what Jake had suggested about his and Mark’s true relationship.

The reality set in that twice that day, he had gotten an erection – not over Mark – but Mark’s father. Trying not to be obvious, Cade again casually turned his eyes to Jake. Despite his attempt to be discreet, his eyes were glued to the hirsute body of a classically handsome man with very short black hair, pumped muscles, a dense two-day beard stubble, and a bulge in his swimsuit that Cade wanted to see.

Cade couldn’t help it. He felt himself becoming hard yet again. Jake looked so amazingly sexy. The only times he had ever allowed himself to think about Jake or Mark this way was late at night in his locked bedroom when there was no chance of anyone finding out. Each experience had been a dichotomy of extremes. Fantasizing about either man never failed to ultimately produce both a sexual euphoria and a spectacular orgasm. But what immediately followed was crushing guilt and shame that he was capable of having such disgusting, unnatural thoughts that would surely repulse Mark and Jake if they knew.

Right now, however, one of his fantasy men was standing in front of him and they were all alone.

“If you keep saluting me like that I might just get a complex,” Jake said, waking Cade from his dream.

“Huh?”

Jake grinned good-naturedly and pointed at Cade’s now bulging swim trunks through the crystal clear water.

Cade felt himself blushing. He was humiliated. "I'm sorry," he said softly, trying to make eye contact but instead only able to look down. "I don't understand this – I don't know what's wrong with me."

"I think that's our cue to resume the conversation we were having before lunch. Why don't we go over to the rocks where we left the towels and talk some more while the sun warms us up? Damn, the water sure is cold, but it's mighty refreshing in this heat, isn't it?"

"Um – yeah – refreshing. You go ahead. I'll be there in just a sec."

Jake chuckled knowingly. "Buddy, it's okay. You're nineteen. I was nineteen once and there were very few times when my dick *wasn't* hard. I ain't gonna judge you and I ain't gonna laugh at you. Well, not laugh much at least. Come on," he smiled and grabbed Cade's hand. "It's all okay."

All Cade could think of at that moment was that Jake Vincenzo was holding his hand.

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