

**DOG
WON'T
HUNT**

a novel

XM MOON

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moonography.com/writing/dog-wont-hunt

I got it.”

“What?” Milo asks, looking up from the paper he’s been working on for the last few hours.

“Jackson Walker. The summer program in Dallas I applied to.”

He blinks, trying to remember what — if anything — he’s been told about this particular program. “That’s the one you wanted, right?”

“Yeah,” Remington laughs. “I mean there were a few, but a couple of them told me that with the amount of work I’ve still got left before my dissertation is done that they’d rather wait, which is fair I guess, but JW wants me.”

“Well, then that’s awesome. Congrats.”

“Thanks.” His smile is still shy, but not nearly as infrequent as Milo had thought it might be when they first met.

“So you’re in Dallas all summer?”

“Nine weeks.”

Milo nods. He really doesn’t know what to say that won’t come off wrong, and the last thing he wants is to seem clingy or depressing. Not when this unlabeled thing they keep doing has been going so well.

“I’m not looking forward to paying rent two places, but—” Remington shrugs. “Should be a good time.”

Rent in two places. Milo can’t even begin to fathom such a thing, since he can only barely afford his rent normally and still hasn’t figured out if he’s going to have to move back in with his grandparents for the summer or

not, since his lease ends a week after the semester and the space he's hoping to take over in the fall isn't available until the start of August. But even as it is, it could be worse. A forty-five-minute drive is a hell of a lot better than being homeless.

Fortunately, he's saved from saying anything else because Remington adds, "Think we're going out for drinks tonight. You gonna be able to come out?"

"Oh, uh... Where and when?" Because of course, it's out of the frying pan and into the fire.

In an ideal world, whatever it is they're doing would just involve the two of them. Or at least, less social complication. In reality, however, it also involves Remington's friends — mostly from his law class rather than his doctoral program — whose tastes have run well over Milo's budget the couple of times Milo's met up with them.

This time isn't going to be any different, Remington's answer confirms, and Milo doesn't have nearly enough time to finish his paper and get ready.

"I can try to meet y'all for a drink later, but I've gotta get this done."

"I know." Remington drops forward, bracing one arm on the back of the couch by Milo's shoulder. "You staying here or going back to your place?"

"Um." Milo blinks, his focus thoroughly lacking now that Remington's face is only a few inches away from his own.

Any question he has about whether or not that's intentional is answered by the slow smile he gets as he

tries to weigh the pros — reliable internet and hot water — against the discomfort of being in someone else's space without them. The discomfort wins out.

“I’ll probably go back to mine. I think I forgot a book I need anyways.”

Lips meet his for a kiss that’s definitely intentionally distracting. When they part, Remington says, “Fine. Be responsible.”

“I don’t know how you do it,” Milo laughs.

Remington winks at him. From anyone else, it would be ridiculous, but when you’re tall, hot, and brilliant, there’s apparently not much you can’t get away with. “You wanna wait and I can give you a ride, or are you leaving me now?”

“I can wait,” Milo says. He doesn’t point out that he isn’t leaving Remington, because there’s nothing to leave. He especially doesn’t say that he doesn’t see what Remington would possibly ever do to make him do so.

The first week is weird. He’s paying rent and he has his own room, so it shouldn’t be different from any other sublease. Normally, a sublease doesn’t involve an apartment full of someone else’s things and no other person, though.

Normally, he isn’t subleasing from someone he’s spent the last few months hanging out with and fucking with no conversation of what’s going on. Never, actually.

The first week, he doesn’t touch anything beyond

what's absolutely necessary. At the end of the second, he admits as much when Remington calls late Sunday morning and asks how things are going. The third, things go to shit. Crampy, moody shit.

It's not like it's unprecedented, but it's rare enough anymore that he's sort of allowed himself to forget. That also means that he's wildly unprepared to deal with it, and even less equipped to handle Remington calling.

"Is everything ok?" Remington asks after Milo finally answers.

He grumbles vaguely.

"Milo?"

"M fine."

"You sure? Because you don't sound fine."

Milo sighs and adjusts the pillow he's curled around so he isn't speaking directly into it. "Just. Having a day."

"Yeah. Tell me about it," Remington replies with a humorless laugh.

"It's nothing. Definitely not why you called at..." he taps his phone screen to check the time. "You really callin' me on your lunch?"

"Mhmm."

He listens to Remington ramble for the next fifteen minutes, his own minimal acknowledgments seemingly enough to keep the conversation going. Of the two of them, Remington has far more to tell anyways, and Milo certainly doesn't mind the distraction from his own problems.

“Are you sure you’re ok?”

Milo sighs again. “It’s just uh— one of those things. Feel like shit, can’t find the ibuprofen, really don’t feel like going anywhere.”

“Oh. There’s some in the medicine cabinet, I think. Or Tylenol. I don’t know if it makes a difference?”

“At this point, no,” he grumbles, dragging himself out of bed and down the hall to the bathroom to check. “Fuck.”

“What?”

“There’s a bottle, but it’s empty.”

“Oh. Then it’s in my nightstand. Don’t ask me which drawer, I don’t know.”

“I’ll be fine.” He stares at the shower, debating if it’ll make things better or worse.

“I mean I’m assuming you can find it, yeah.”

“I’m not—” He exhales slowly, fighting the urge to snap. “Don’t worry about it, dude. Seriously.”

There’s an extended silence, then Milo’s phone begins to chime with a new incoming call. Video, this time. After another brief but intense internal debate, he answers.

Five hundred-something miles away, he watches Remington exhale a cloud of smoke. It shouldn’t be hot, but it is, and Milo’s insides twist in an entirely different way.

“You’re still in the bathroom.”

“Yep. I can see why you got picked for this fancy-ass

internship. Your observation skills are off the charts," Milo replies drily.

Remington laughs around a drag, more smoke billowing as he says, "Ok but seriously, are you gonna be alright? Did you get in a fight with a soccer team of toddlers or something? A thousand tiny kicks to the shins?"

Despite everything, Milo laughs. "No. It's just uh—y'know. Things I'd rather never have to deal with again."

It takes a second, but thankfully recognition dawns on Remington's face before Milo has to explain further. He says, "Stop being weird. It's not like you haven't been in my room before. And I'm not sure if there are any or if they're still good but there might also be some like, sour patch gummies either also in my nightstand or my desk drawer."

The video call was a mistake. Jaw tight, Milo glares at the shower and silently curses every single thing on Earth.

"Milo?"

"Where'd *you* get edibles?"

Remington exhales a laugh. "My brother left them there a while back. Clearly, he doesn't care about 'em that much, and I've uh... heard they help?"

He can't deal with this. Especially not when Remington is watching him intently as he smokes a cigarette in some expensive-looking corporate patio area.

"Can I— Do you need anything else? Like, obviously anything that's there that you need, it's yours, but is there anything I can do?"

“Nah, even your dick’s not that big,” Milo says with a choked laugh. And god, if he wouldn’t be all over that right now, even as miserable as he feels.

Clearly whatever exposure Remington’s had that taught him weed helps cramps didn’t cover other areas, though, so in response to his confused frown, Milo explains, “That helps too. It’s almost a catch-22, though, because under typical conditions it’s kind of gross, and like, you feel like shit especially in a very localized way, so it doesn’t exactly seem appealing.”

“Oh. Well, if you need me in a few more weeks..”

“Thanks, but uh— it doesn’t really come around often so fingers crossed, I don’t.”

“Guess I’ll have to find another excuse, then,” Remington says with a bright grin. “I gotta go back in. Let me know if there is anything? I’m not gonna keep pushing, but—”

“Yeah. Um. Thanks.”

His smile softens and he nods. “Go steal my drugs. Gotta go.”

The call ends and Milo sighs. At himself, at the situation, at Remington. He crosses the hallway to Remington’s closed door, still hesitating despite the numerous direct assurances that he could and should rifle through the man’s drawers. He finds the bottle of Tylenol easily enough, stashed in the top drawer of Remington’s nightstand alongside a familiar bottle of lube, an almost-empty box of condoms, and a handful of other odds and ends. Milo almost doesn’t bother looking for the gummies, but he decides of the two discomforts, he’d rather spend a couple of extra seconds searching. The bottom drawer

yields nothing, but as soon as he opens the wide drawer in Remington's desk, he sees the neon yellow pouch.

"Well, thank you Remington's brother, I guess," he mutters to himself as he grabs the packet and closes the drawer.

Three hours later, there's a knock at the front door. He almost ignores it, but his phone vibrates a second later.

Remington > Took the liberty of ordering pizza. Should be there soon if not now. Hope you're feeling better.

He certainly feels something, and less of it's pain than it was a few hours earlier. Still, Milo isn't sure what to make of it.

After that, it gets easier, though. They don't actually talk much — a handful of texts and memes here and there. Sometimes he gets typo-ridden messages late at night, or a blurry picture, which is his cue to give Remington shit the next morning, knowing he'll be tired and hungover and in a mood. For all that the situation is well outside of anything Milo's used to, it's not bad. Just... different. And what kind of hypocrite would he be if he pitched a fit about something different?
