

# Act Nice

*...or they don't like you*

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Buckle up!

# Chapter 1

Wayne Larson slumps into the dressing room chair and lets out a tired sigh. Five minutes between the concert and leaving the concert club, while Adam Carter changes and goes to the toilet—a star they are constantly protecting from loving fans from now on and the next two months of the American tour—and you need to dive back into work. Into the screaming crowd that tries to knock down anyone who interferes with its way to the idol.

Larson looks at his watch: three minutes left. He rubs his eyes, closes them, and relaxes. The FBI had taught him to take a breather to recuperate: sometimes, he didn't even have time to sleep, and such techniques helped him stay awake at the most crucial moment.

His partner, Darren Clayton, a tall, blond man in the same black suit as Wayne, with an earpiece in his ear and a holster on his belt, walks into the dressing room.

'Resting?' Darren grins, grabs a bottle of water from the table, and drains it halfway.

'Yeah. I hate concerts,' Wayne adds a little lower.

The quiet moment ends when Adam bursts into the dressing room, loud and bustling, pats Darren on the shoulder, and pulls a bottle of whiskey from the guitar tech's bag.

'Why so glum? The fun has just begun!' Carter exclaims, walking up to the mirror and ruffling his blond hair, which has become messed and wet on his forehead and neck during the concert. Adam throws off his light-brown leather jacket on a chair and stretches.

'The fun's almost over,' Wayne says flatly, standing up and straightening his suit. 'Let's go, we don't have much time.'

'You're so boring, I'm sleepy,' Adam mutters, pouring Jack Daniels into three plastic cups. 'All right, let's have some whisky and go to the people.'

'We don't drink at work,' Wayne tells him for the hundredth time.

The FBI had taught him endless patience, too.

Adam rolls his eyes.

'Oh, shut up! Just drink!'

Wayne and Darren don't touch their cups. Adam looks at them, grunts, and drains his own, then reaches for the rest, but Wayne grabs his wrist. Adam raises his eyebrows and almost chokes with indignation when Wayne says:

'You can't drink that much. Later.'

'Who are you to me, nannies?' Adam retorts, making another attempt, but Wayne holds tight. Adam grunts and steps toward Wayne, pulling himself up and exhaling into his face, 'Or daddies?'

Wayne's nostrils flare, and he purses his lips and lets go of Adam's hand.

'That's it. At least you'll drink, Darren?'

Carter turns around, but the bodyguard is already at the door.

'Let's go now,' Clayton nods toward the exit. Adam rolls his eyes again, grabs a bottle of water and the jacket from the chair, and comes out of the dressing room. Larson follows and closes the door.

Dragging one of America's top pop stars past a crowd of enthusiastic fans is not easy, especially when the star doesn't care about his own safety and all the established rules. They walk quickly down the small hallway to the exit, Darren ahead and slightly to the left, Wayne behind and to the right. The footsteps echo in the silence, and it's like two minutes of silence before a storm.

They stop at the door.

'Is the car ready?' Larson asks the driver over the radio, and when he gets an affirmative answer, he nods to Clayton. 'We're going out.'

'Maybe I'm not ready,' Adam says in a low voice, but when both bodyguards turn sharply to him, he smiles broadly. 'Just kidding! They are my fans, they love me! What will they do to me? Let's go!'

'They're going to tear you up into a thousand little freaky, noisy, whimsical little boys,' that's what Wayne thinks, but of course, he doesn't say it, just nods to Darren at the door. And just before it swings open, he sees Adam gasping in and out of breath. The screeching of what seems to be a hundred people or more immediately hits his ears, but Wayne doesn't look; his only goal is to walk the twenty meters to the car and leave Adam in a single copy. He and Darren would have been happy to cover the distance in half a minute, as they used to do when they were escorting high rollers, but Adam is already reaching for a girl's hand to shake, grabbing a marker to sign an autograph, picking up someone's phone to take a selfie. Wayne grabs him around the waist, trying to make him move faster, and Carter turns around:

'Hey, take it easy, cowboy, just a couple of autographs and photos.'

Wayne exchanges glance with Darren, understanding each other without words, and they both seem to be mentally cursing the day they got kicked out of work and had to take a job guarding this superstar for youngsters. Wayne squeezes and unclenches his hand a couple of times, he's not used to grabbing clients like this, and he can't help but think of feeling the tight muscles under his fingers.

They're about halfway through the crowd when someone starts pulling on Adam's T-shirt, and Wayne snatches it away before Adam even notices.

There are more hands, Wayne is almost hugging Adam, and Darren, noticing this, very quickly clears a path for them to the car, not standing on ceremony with people in the way. Clayton opens the door, Adam dives into the limo, the bodyguards follow, and after a few seconds, the car starts moving, but they still hear the sound of hands hitting it for a while.

Adam looks intently into Wayne's eyes; for some reason, Larson is lost under that gaze. It is strange: he'd had to endure more than that on missions, and he'd been stared into the eyes of notorious murderers, maniacs, and Mafiosi, and not a muscle in his face had ever moved. But that look seemed to get under his skin and make it burn, spreading through his blood not adrenaline at all—something else.

Carter stares for a few more seconds, then turns away as if nothing has happened. He opens the window, leans out, and waves to the fans, shouting something while Darren holds him by the hips to keep him from falling out of the car.

Wayne glances at Darren, who just grins, and for some reason, Wayne thinks Darren understands. Nonsense, he didn't understand anything, and Wayne didn't even know what he might understand. It's just that Carter has already had a few drinks—he needs a little on an empty stomach—and he's as excited and worked up as ever after the concert, so he's channeling his overflowing sexual energy wherever he can. And it hit Wayne.

Adam sits back in his seat, smiles at Darren and Wayne, and closes his eyes as he starts humming one of his songs.

'We're standing here, looking into each other's eyes... We can feel the heat, and it's getting hard to hide...'

Wayne tries not to listen, looking around as if someone might be bothering them in the car, but in his peripheral vision, Adam opens his eyes, stares at him again, and finishes singing.

'We're feeling something, we can't deny...'

Larson turns to look him in the eye and swallows. He knows it's just a song, he's heard it dozens of times as he stood at the side of the stage and made sure no one dragged Adam into the fan zone by his legs, and never once did Wayne have a picture in his mind of how he buries his fingers in Carter's blond hair and pulls him for a kiss.

Never once before this second.

Adam looks down at his bodyguard's thighs, grins, and then bites his lip. Wayne doesn't even have to look down to know he's aroused.

Wayne meets Darren's gaze, Clayton raises his eyebrows and grins, and Wayne does his best to keep his face straight and at least look professional. He doesn't know how long it will take to get to the hotel, as it had to be changed after fans figured out the room number and tried to climb through the window on the sill from the next room.

'They just love me so much,' Adam said with a disarming smile, but they didn't listen to him, knowing that things might not end as innocuous as they seemed to this naive kid.

Now they are going to a different but certainly no less luxurious hotel, and Wayne really wants to ask the driver to step on the gas harder because the atmosphere in the cabin has slowly but surely begun to change to a completely unpredictable one, and it's unnerving. Adam continues to hum, and his voice pulls Wayne into a net.

'Two minutes,' the driver says suddenly, and they both snap to attention, 'there's no one near the entrance, it's a closed area.'

These words do not calm them down: a fence or a barrier doesn't bother fans who can get wherever they need.

The car stops at the entrance. Darren gets out first, then a slightly swaying Adam and Wayne, ready to catch him at any moment. The hotel is truly luxurious, but Wayne is completely unimpressed: how many of them he has already seen, with high ceilings, gold surfaces, and mint chocolates on the pillows. The elevator is cramped for four people: in such hotels, there is always this strange man whose only function is to press the button for the desired floor. So when they finally get out, Adam exhales noisily as if he hasn't breathed in a couple of minutes. Darren looks at the number on the key, goes to the right room, unlocks the door, grabs Adam around the waist as Carter's about to enter, and pulls Adam back against him with professional speed.

'I'll check the room first.'

Carter turns to look at him with a grin.

'If I knew you could do this, I would have—'

'Would have what?' Darren asks with ice calm.

'I don't know, I didn't think of it...'

Wayne sees his partner rolls his eyes for a second, and grins. They will suffer from Adam even more than they thought.

'Stay here, I'll check it out.'

Adam and Wayne stay in the hallway, Carter leaning back wearily against the wall, and when Darren comes out with a brief "clear," Adam quickly steps inside.

'Will you have a drink with me?' a voice comes from the back of the room, along with the clink of a glass.

'We don't drink at work,' Wayne says automatically, 'we're in the next room. Call if you need anything.'

'Aren't you supposed to be with me and guard me?'

'Only when there is an immediate threat. It is unlikely that any of the fans will climb on crampons on the 27th floor.'

'Well, yes— then— good night.'

Darren closes the door, and they go into the next room. As soon as the door closes behind them, Wayne lets out a tired sigh.

'It's just unbearable. I miss the times when we took that gang of drug dealers; it was somehow quieter and more predictable.'

'And those nasty bastards didn't turn you on, either,' Darren grins.

Wayne grunts, unbuttoning his cuffs.

'It's a coincidence. I was thinking about coming to the silence and going to bed, which is very arousing.'

He hears Darren laugh and grins to himself, pushing thoughts of Adam out of his mind. Just as they're straightening their beds for sleep, there's a knock on the door.

Wayne and Darren look at each other; Larson goes to the door, opens it a little, and sees Adam.

'I can't sleep. Can I stay with you?' Carter says and walks past Wayne into the room without waiting for an answer.

‘We were already going to bed. We have to get up early tomorrow, do you remember?’

‘Oh, of course, I do,’ Adam grimaces, immediately walking to the drinks table. He pours himself a whiskey and rolls his eyes at Darren’s voice.

‘One glass.’

‘Hey, you allowed me to have a drink later, didn’t you?’ Adam says and drains his glass in one gulp, then pours himself another.

‘Finish your drink and go back to your room,’ Wayne says coldly, walking up to him.

‘Why are you so boring! Why did Dad hire you at all!’ Adam says resentfully and takes another couple of sips.

‘Don’t you want to sleep?’ Darren asks calmly, already sprawled out on the bed.

‘Nope,’ Adam shakes his head and takes another drink. ‘Shall we have some fun? Maybe poker? Or “Truth or dare”?’ He squints mischievously at Wayne, then bursts out laughing.

‘If we don’t get enough sleep, it will be worse for you,’ Wayne says, pushing away the thought that his anger is ultimately out of proportion to the reason for it.

‘Come on, what can fans do—’

‘Anything!’ Larson interrupts. ‘You may not be as good as Lennon, but you can easily get hit in the head and dragged into the alley,’ Wayne blurts out, dragging Adam by the elbow to the exit.

‘Did you freak out?! I’ll tell my Dad everything! You’ll get fired! And your boyfriend, too! You pricks!’

‘Go to bed,’ Wayne says, pushing Adam out of the room and slamming the door in his face.

‘You’re tough on him,’ Darren whistles and chuckles.

‘He needs to know what is appropriate in our relationship and what is not. We’re his bodyguards, not his homies or drinking buddies,’ Wayne says, finally settling down on the bed.

‘The guy’s just bored. Think about it: traveling around the world with a bunch of adult men, you only get a glimpse of girls, and you don’t even have time to pick up someone. No friends, no relationships, it’s like death at his age,’ says Darren. Wayne shakes his head and exhales.

‘How do you have the ability to think about it all?’

‘There’s nothing else to think about. It’s not a dusty job,’ Darren chuckles.

Wayne smiles. ‘Good night, Darren.’

‘Good night, bro.’

Larson stares at the ceiling and takes a deep breath. For a moment, he feels bad for being rude, but he knows he’s right. And they really need to get some sleep. As if they don’t have the ability to stay active even after three hours of sleep.

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Adam stares resentfully at the door slamming in his face for a few seconds before returning to his room. At first, he was happy with the idea that now he had security—after all, it was some kind of status, and he always loved new acquaintances. The guys even seemed dope before; at least they are younger than everyone else in the crew—he’s 21, and the bodyguards are 25 or 26.

But their boredom and desire to persist in following the rules are annoying. Adam’s life was already full of rules, restrictions, and inhibitions. He even drinks alcohol only when his father, Matt, who is his producer, and crew aren’t around, which is extremely rare. Being a star turned out to be much more boring than he thought: no parties, sex, and alcohol, but only concerts—limos—hotels—dressing rooms. And how he sometimes wants to do something crazy...

Adam remembers Wayne looking at him in the limo and Darren grabbing him and holding him so tight that his breath caught in his throat. That’s what he thinks is really new and totally crazy... He falls back on the bed and bites his lip.

They’re so handsome in their plain black suits and their arms—hell, Adam would give anything to be in those strong arms again, but under different circumstances—but their stubbornness and boredom are infuriating. He wishes they were just like Adam: reckless, slightly crazy, not thinking about the consequences, but just enjoying life. How many things could be done...

Adam runs his hand under the waistband of his jeans and groans as he caresses himself, imagining Darren holding his waist tight, not letting him move, and Wayne unbuttoning his fly. Carter arches up and moves his arm faster, afraid that the fantasy will dissolve as quickly as his hope for a good evening tonight. He licks his lips, breathes noisily, and grabs the sheet with his fingers as he would grab Wayne’s jacket. After the orgasm, he laughs at his own audacity.

The alcoholic haze drags him to sleep, and right before he drifts off, he remembers how Wayne pushed him out of the room, which completely erases all the pleasant aftertaste.

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