

Grounded

by Wrestlr

[M/M, Sci Fi]

Synopsis: Ace lost everything in the psi-war, and now he seeks a new connection with his past.

Disclaimer: If you are not of legal age, or if you offended by sexual situations, go elsewhere. Everybody in the story is legal age. Parts of this story may be autobiographical, or it might be all fiction--who can say.

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Comments to wrestlr@iname.com

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Ace had not planned to come out here tonight. But here, now, he decided that everything about the riverbank seemed different at night, the way the waist-high grasses at the edge of the clearing seemed to dance in the breeze and the twisting light from the bonfire. The river coiled closer from the north, like something feral and obsidian-dark, before the firelight warmed it, gave it a thousand blinking eyes to glare back at them, and it slithered away into the darkness, impervious.

Weekdays, the merciless sun blazed down and no one else from town came here. Ace liked to drive his ancient truck out to the riverbed with his pencils and notebook. He was supposed to be writing down the people and things he remembered, his impressions of them, putting the pieces together--therapy, the medics called it, a way to coax his memories to return like skittish colts--but mostly he sat and sketched the area around him instead, had discovered a talent for sketching, something new that had not been there before, or at least something no one seemed to have known about, as if the right side of his brain worked better than the left now, after the attack. Usually he would find a place to sit about a mile farther down the bank, but sometimes he hiked this far upriver too. Being out here felt more like home than his tiny apartment, a single dim room over the barber shop in town, the nearly useless kitchenette, old trophies and photographs, notes stuck in random places to prod his memory. Out here were blackberry brambles and tall grass, clover and skeletal flat rocks alongside the riverbed, cool beneath his bare feet. Out here Ace was able to forget the burden of everything he no longer remembered.

Ace had not planned to come tonight, not until Mason asked. Someone pressed a card, a map crudely hand-drawn on the back, into Ace's hand at Orville's, the only bar in town, last night. Afterward, Mason had followed Ace into the parking lot, slid into the passenger seat of Ace's truck, leaning close enough into Ace that he felt Mason's whispers on his neck as Mason pushed up his tee-shirt, touched him, opened his pants, jerked him off, so slowly, so naughty-dirty, all the while murmuring about soaring eagles and fallen angels and the smoky taste of Emily Jane Baker's pussy back when they were in high school.

Ace did not know or care much about Emily Jane Baker at that moment, though he knew he should have, and high school was three years ago, he had been told, a mystery now, separated from now by Ace's time in the military immediately following graduation and by the attack a few months ago that ended his military career. The psi-war was far away too, another mystery. But there in the parking lot of Orville's, Mason's voice in his ear had him ready to cum, and Mason's hand around his cock-shaft, thumbing over the slit right there--yes, right there, just right--made his hips buck up hard as his orgasm burned away everything else for those few precious seconds. Ace was still struggling to catch his breath when Mason ran his fingers through the semen on Ace's belly, gathered what he could, used it as lube to jerk himself off too, mouth agape, legs spread wide as the floorboard would allow. Moonlight through the windshield turned Mason's skin silver-blue, nearly like an angel himself, and Ace could not--would not--have looked away for all the memories in the world.

Emily Jane Baker was here tonight too, of course, laughing, loose curls dark around her face, pretty, dancing back against some shirtless boy at the rim of the bonfire glow. Ace did not recognize the boy, the curves of his bare shoulders and his khaki shorts hanging low, but he sure looked pretty too from where Ace stood. Everyone looked pretty from here, Ace decided, thanks to the firelight and the smoke, hazy and sweet, sparks in the air and trampled grass underfoot, and Mason singing softly, voice urgent as a beacon in the night, as he strummed his guitar.

Ace picked his way indirectly to Mason. Dora Shore's hand was warm in his for a while, pulling him into the dancing, twirling away and spinning back again, her body soft and strong against his, her earrings catching sparks of faint light. Terry Jay's thick fingers passed a joint to Ace. Dora kissed Ace's cheek as he sucked on the joint, and then she danced away, taking Terry Jay with her. Mason caught Ace's eye and smiled, licked his lips. Ace smiled back, then looked away, up into the impenetrable dark bowl of sky and stars.

He headed toward the bonfire, toward Mason. Anything was possible here tonight, Ace thought, with the river and the fire, homemade beer in dark bottles, the stars shining brightly above the wide flat rocks and trampled grass where they were. Mason leaned close and Ace blinked, feeling slightly stoned already, smiling as Mason smirked and untangled Terry Jay's joint from Ace's fingers. Ace had charcoal smears at his cuticles from his sketching earlier that day, more smudges across his knuckles. He had still-new scars he could not explain from the crash, smooth skin that tingled and itched across the front of his bare shoulder, shirtless and exposed to the firelight and night sky, and more scars hidden by his jeans at the back of his hip, his thigh.

Mason said, "Sit with me for a minute," and Ace already knew how Mason's minutes turned into hours, and he sat anyway, close, and felt the heat of Mason's skin, different from that of the fire. Mason's heat was like the air and his voice like smoke, raspy and sweet, curling into Ace when he breathed. Mason's eyes were brown and gold, and he had freckles all over his shoulders, the same color as his hair; he liked chocolate milk shakes and lots of ketchup on his fries; and he could fix just about anything that had a motor. He had a tattoo on his bicep, a defiant eagle and wolf in a burst of red, white and blue from when he first joined the Army, and another of a trail of shamrocks along his side that twisted down low, disappearing into the waistline of his jeans.

Ace's body bore a matching trail of shamrocks too, but down the opposite side. Though he did not remember

getting them, he knew they were there, could imagine Mason and himself driving somewhere in some city back before Ace took off for flight school, Mason's fingers gripping his hand, lips dark and swollen as if begging to be kissed, both of them reeking of whiskey and laughing their asses off, toasting the luck of the Irish. Ace imagined that often, especially when masturbating in the shower, his fingers tracing the shamrocks, thinking of Mason, how he would taste, how he would feel, how he would sound with Ace's dick buried deep inside him and his breath snagged up in his throat.

Fuck, Ace thought, shifting uncomfortably, his dick hard now and trapped in the press between his hip and jeans.

"Remember this one?" Mason asked as he picked out a new rhythm on his guitar. He hummed softly as he plucked the melody on the strings, sending the notes dancing into the night air, across the rocks and river. Ace shook his head. He did, and he did not. Mason smiled anyway, strummed his guitar, and his singing voice rang out, and Ace tried to think about something, anything, else.

Ace watched the other people dance and drink and laugh until the song was done. "These are our friends," he said, looking around, not sure whether he was forming a question or a statement.

"Mmm," Mason nodded. He set his guitar aside. He ran his thumb over Ace's chin and kissed him slowly, one hand on the back of Ace's neck to hold him close. ""It wasn't like this before," Mason said softly. "With you and me, I mean. I don't know if you remember that."

Ace closed his eyes, leaned into Mason's touch. He had no memory of what their friendship was like before but, from the way his brain filled in the missing pieces, he thought he must have wanted Mason even then, could not imagine having ever wanted anything else. He remembered Mason in ways he could not explain--details, snippet images. He felt safer around Mason than around anyone else, like he was okay again, like Mason was cool with him even if Ace was not the same man he had been before the incident. "Does it matter?"

"No, not to me," Mason answered, and just then someone threw another log on the fire and the embers popped, sparks soaring in the air. One girl squealed and Ace saw Terry Jay fold his big arms around her, heard her laugh, high and sweet, heard Terry Jay laugh too.

Ace's hands on his thighs felt sweaty, and Mason's eyes were on his, as Mason leaned in to kiss him, his fingers sprawling across Ace's jaw and neck. Ace's body knew how to kiss and be kissed, knew how to do things that Ace could not remember learning--he could tie a knot in a fishing line without thinking about it, cast it out over the water, make the fly dance just so; he could drive his old truck with no problem; hell, he could still sit in the cockpit of a plane and fly her just fine, as he had proven when the attack hit, not that anyone would let him now. Not anymore.

He was a hero, they told him. He had been piloting a transport plane when the telepathic attack hit. The enemy must be getting desperate, they said, must have had multiple telepaths working together to burst through the plane's shielding like that. Ace had turned the plane away. He was one of the lucky ones, had managed to hold on to enough of himself to remember how to fly the plane even as he lost nearly everything else, managed to crash-land the transport safely, closer to friendly territory where they could be rescued. He was a hero. The one hundred and thirty-seven soldiers on board were all alive. The mind-wipe attack had reduced some to mewling vegetables, while others like Ace lost chunks of themselves, their pasts, but they were all alive, thanks to him. He was one of the lucky ones, he was told, though in his darker moods he did not understand why this blackness, in which nearly everything that happened to him before had drowned,

could be considered luck. He was a hero, he was told, even if he did not remember what he had done.

His memories might return, or they might not, the medics had told him, shrugging. The truth was, they were not sure how much damage the attack had done to him, or how to undo it. But either way, the medics told him, he should go live his life, make new memories.

Mason nipped gently at Ace's lip, teasing him back into the now, before sighing into a kiss. Ace heard himself moan and decided it sounded sexy. He knew his body remembered fucking, remembered it well, wanted to do it with Mason, even though Mason swore last night, in Ace's truck, that they had never done anything like that together before. Ace's hips pressed closer. He savored Mason's mouth on his, his hands, the heat in the night air, and the *there*-ness of the river rolling by and the rock upon which they sat, the scrape of Mason's stubble against his throat.

He pulled away just enough to see Mason's eyes, his flushed cheeks, and his smile as Mason picked up his guitar again. Everything felt so simple, so easy, being here like this, and Ace leaned back and closed his eyes, listened to the night close in around them. Dora Shore sat beside him for a while, ran her fingers through his hair. She stood up to leave, kissed Mason's cheek, and climbed into Terry Jay's arms. When Ace looked around again, no one was around now except him and Mason, the fire burning low. The river moved by, unconcerned.

"I need you," Ace said. "I want ..." And everything was that simple, Mason's smile against his, his eyes crinkled up at the corners. Ace wanted to think he had been smoother before, would have known exactly the right things to say and do, but Mason was smooth enough for the both of them, Ace thought, savoring the way Mason's fingers curled and teased into the waistband of his jeans, dragged over his stomach, his ribs, Mason's mouth following close behind, the hot lap of tongue, then the lightest scrape of teeth. Ace had feared he would be self-conscious about this, about his still-fresh scars, about his desire, the way the dark head of his dick was already poking out of his jeans, exposed and vulnerable, but he could not be, not now, not with Mason leaning right up against him, spreading their long-discarded shirts out on the grass behind them.

Mason's dick was hard against Ace's hip, soft denim there, slick skin everywhere else, his voice raspy in Ace's ear: "So fuckin' hot--you have no idea." Ace lay back on the grass, Mason above him. With the way Mason looked, the last of the firelight in his eyes, in his hair, Ace thought Mason was wrong, that Mason was the *so fuckin' hot* one.

"Mason," Ace breathed, and Mason kissed an ambling path down Ace's body, his palm gliding over Ace's fly, tongue darting out to taste the slick dribble of pre-cum on Ace's belly before he wrapped his lips, hot and wet, around the head of Ace's dick above his waistband, and Ace could not help rocking his hips a little, could not help the clamp of his fingers on the back of Mason's neck. "Fuck, Mason."

"Later maybe, yeah," Mason said, that wicked grin, as he popped open the buttons of Ace's jeans and tugged them off his hips, knuckles sliding over the scars on the back of his thigh, making Ace shiver. Mason kept one palm right there, fingers splayed wide, and Ace tried not to squirm. Mason shifted lower, rubbed his cheek along Ace's belly, across the crease of his thigh, stubble scraping over the shamrocks, his mouth pressed against the lowest one. "You remember these?"

Ace knew he should smile and nod, because smiling and nodding reassured people, made them stop the uncomfortable insistence on reminding him what he had lost. But he would not do that with Mason. Besides, there was something, faded but there. "Luck of the Irish," Ace whispered, and Mason bit his lip and swallowed hard.

Ace tensed, wondering, but Mason just laughed softly, his eyes flashing as he flicked his tongue along the length of Ace's dick and sucked it back down. Ace wanted to flip his body around so they could suck each other, to feel the weight of Mason's cock in his mouth, poking at the back of his throat, craved to taste him there, lower, everywhere, but then Mason's calloused fingers were in his mouth, earthy and smoky-sweet, then gone too soon, and Ace could hear himself moaning, high needy sounds that he could not stop. Mason's fingers circled his hole and pressed in, spit-slick, rough, feeling so different from his own.

Ace leaned up on his elbow, scrubbed his other hand through Mason's hair. "Mason--fuck, man--just--c'mon." Mason let Ace's dick slip out his mouth and slap against his belly. Ace was breathing hard, and Mason was too, skin flushed, lips swollen, his fingers in Ace's ass and twisting slowly. "Shit, Mason, have you always been such a fuckin' tease?"

"Mmm, yup," Mason grinned. He still had his jeans on, which was unsuitable for so many reasons Ace was too dazed to catalog; but at least Ace could see how hard Mason was, could see tube of his shaft and where his cock-head leaked against the faded denim. "Been teasin' you for years."

"Yeah?" Ace was not sure whether that was true but determined his question did not matter. *This* was what mattered, he decided, what he had now, what he could see, touch, taste, remember.

"Yeah. Took you long enough to notice."

"Hard not to notice now," Ace replied. He pulled at Mason's jeans, popping the buttons open. Mason's dick swung out, nearly hitting Ace in the eye. It was shiny at the tip, red-gold curls dark around the base. Mason shifted to his knees, mumbling, "Sorry," as he wiped his fingers on their shirts, dug a rubber out of his pocket, and tore the packet open with his teeth.

Ace reached for the rubber, but Mason shook his head, rolled it on his own cock. "Too close," he whispered, leaning in to brush a kiss across Ace's lips, his knees nudging Ace's thighs open, his cock sliding into the fiery crease of Ace's ass. "Please--just please tell me you're fuckin' ready."

Ace nodded, wrapped his hands around his thighs, hitched them higher. Mason's blunt dick-head rubbed against his hole, Mason's hand against his skin guiding it in, thick and hot, bigger than his fingers, better, with Mason's mouth on his again, sweat dripping from Mason's forehead, pressing in slowly, so slowly, better, Mason's hips twisting, both of them moaning now.

The entry hurt at first, as if his body had little familiarity being the one penetrated, but Mason was experienced enough for them both, and now Ace felt himself blazing. Ace swallowed hard, wished he could see Mason's cock fucking in and out of him, wished he could see his body stretch to take it, and then Mason shifted and angled Ace's hips higher, and Ace gasped, "Fuck," because it felt so good like this, unbelievably good, this slow heat, his hips rocking up and up, Mason's hand wrapped around his dick exactly right. Ace knew he could not last, would cum just like this, too soon, pinned between the earth and Mason's cock pressed in his ass, thrusting, probing deep into the core of him.

Ace bit down hard on his lip but he could not stop it, the eruption of his orgasm, the incandescent splash of cum on his belly and chest, Mason cursing above him, hoarse and breathless, hips losing all rhythm: "Fuck!--Fuck, Ace!" It felt so damned good, so right, fireflies in the tall grass, the solid earth under his shoulders, Mason's sweat dripping down on him, the river, the stars overhead, all that slow burn in his blood and Mason fucking him hard, leaning over and gasping, "Gonna make me shoot," before Mason pressed his mouth against Ace's throat and Ace's fingers twisted themselves in his hair. Then Mason groaned and

shuddered into his own orgasm.

Afterward, with his soft dick sticky on Ace's stomach, their legs tangled together, Mason murmured, "I missed all this, last tour over there--this place, you." Ace frowned and nodded; he imagined he probably had also missed these same things. "We used to come out here camping all the time when we were kids," Mason said, smiling, his fingers tracing the recent scars on Ace's shoulder, confidently, the same way he might tease a tune from his guitar. "We learned to fish right over there. Remember?"

Ace shook his head, ran his fingertip over Mason's bottom lip, and Mason chuckled softly, licked at Ace's charcoal-stained knuckle. Ace looked up at the dark sky for a moment, then back at Mason on the ground alongside him. He would worry about the mysteries later. "All I remember is you," Ace said, watching Mason's eyes light up, listening to the breeze through the grass, the enduring rolling river. Yes, Ace decided, this place was different at night but, here beside Mason, it still felt more like home than anywhere else.
