

BUT HE'S
A *Cop!*

RANCHO LOBOS SERIES: BOOK ONE

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Chapter One

Justin Flemming shook his head as he turned off of Wilshire Boulevard onto Serrano Street. Koreatown was nearby, and many of the residents were older, having come from Korea two or more generations ago. What he was shaking his head about was the diminutive Asian woman waving him down, as if he had a choice whether or not to stop.

“*Annyeonghaseyo!*” she screamed, waving at the post office truck, then... wait for it... “You ‘Just-in’ time, again! Hahahhahaha!”

“Good morning, Mrs. Kim! *Annyeonghaseyo* to you!”

Mrs. Kim had taught him the traditional Korean greeting for “hello” years ago. Occasionally, she’d tried to teach him other words like *nalang gyeolhonhaejullae*, which meant, “Will you marry me?” This not-so-subtle lesson was to be used the next time he saw Hye Lim, Mrs. Kim’s unmarried granddaughter.

Justin wasn’t interested in learning that particular phrase, frequently telling the Korean woman it was just too difficult for him to learn.

“Then you could tell her in English!” Mrs. Kim helpfully suggested.

Justin just smiled at her as he gathered up her mail for the day. It wasn’t that Hye Lim wasn’t stunning—she was. The problem was he wasn’t exactly sure how Mrs. Kim would feel about him asking if Hye Lim might just have an equally hot-looking brother. Justin once looked up what Google Translate said to let her know he was gay, but he then thought better of it. Why spoil it for her?

Justin handed the mail to her, smiled, and waved goodbye to her as he chugged onto the next house. As he was driving away, he noticed how slowly she was moving back to her home. She was almost skipping down the driveway when he arrived. His work delivering mail was probably the highlight of her day.

A few months before, Mrs. Kim was nowhere to be seen. Justin had turned off his truck and walked up to the front door of the Kim home. Hye Lim greeted him warmly, but he could see something was wrong. The family had called 911 over the weekend, and her grandmother was in the hospital. He got the name of the hospital and Mrs. Kim’s room number, then stopped by with flowers after his shift. It was then that he realized how reassuring it was to see her every day when he delivered her mail.

Justin was keenly aware that for many elderly people in the neighborhoods, their letter carriers—what people used to call postmen—were their only contact throughout the week. The unimaginable occurred more times than the U.S. Postal Service wanted to count. It was the letter carrier who was the first to see someone who lived alone was ill. They were the person who saw the effects of spousal or elder abuse, and in severe cases, the person who discovered someone who lived by themselves has passed away... alone.

As a newly single person himself, he wondered if in twenty or thirty years he'd be found alone and dead... that is if the USPS was even around by then. Justin had finished his route early as was his custom, being that he'd been doing the job for nearly three decades. Normally, he would have checked in with his supervisor after he was done to see if there were any uncovered routes he could take for the overtime. Not today.

It was Saturday, and he desperately wanted to get home, have a beer, shower, and make dinner. Today was not the day for working another shift. Justin was looking forward to his plans for a quiet evening as he left the post office. The thought did occur to him that he could take his best friend's advice and do a different type of "ordering in." Whenever possible, Grayson's idea of ordering in was to find someone on Grindr or Scruff who was willing to come over, fuck him, and leave. No muss, no fuss, and better yet, Gray never had to get dressed to find his hookups.

That thought was certainly a possibility, though fleeting at most. Justin knew better than to take what he considered to be the easy way out. His husband, Troy, had filed for divorce after twenty years together. Troy allowed himself to be swept off his feet by a young hunk at the gym near their house... a hottie damn near twenty-five years younger than him, who was closer to sixty than fifty. Justin and Troy had been married for only five years, but they moved in together shortly after they met. The divorce wasn't messy, per se, but it was a whole hellava lot of work. Justin kept the house, which he'd now had to himself for over a month. Troy got the vacation cabin in Big Bear Lake, up in the San Bernardino National Forest.

The arrangement suited Justin just fine. It meant he didn't have to move and left Troy and Mr. Hottie to do the heavy lifting—though the kid did most of the lifting while ogling the other two movers. Justin was gracious enough not to mention the latter fact to Troy. His ex-husband had made his bed, and now he could sleep in it with the kid, at least as long as the younger man stayed with him. Troy had an excellent job working for one of the premiere casting agencies in Hollywood, which Justin suspected was more of a draw toward stardom than Troy's nearly sixty-year-old body. Granted, Troy kept himself in decent shape—he had to in Hollywood to do his job—but even with the regular Botox injections and a recent facelift, he couldn't convince anyone he was in his thirty's anymore either.

Justin drove his 2018 Toyota Prius Prime into the two-car garage, then closed the garage door as he walked out to the mailbox. As usual, most of the mail was for Troy. He rolled his eyes, aware his ex hadn't bothered to put in a forward for his mail. You'd think that a guy who negotiated multi-million-dollar contracts for actors would have the brains to do something as easy as putting in a forward... but no. That was far too beneath him.

Fine, Justin thought as he took the letters inside. *I'll just put "Addressee Unknown" on the envelopes and put them back in the box on Monday. I'm over dealing with his lack of follow-through. I'm not his damn secretary.*

Justin threw the mail on the kitchen table and grabbed a Bud Light on his way to the bedroom. He'd switched to the second master bedroom when Troy left. The house was remodeled with two nearly identical suites, both with en suite bathrooms and sitting areas. The only difference was the

one he'd moved into had both a small Jacuzzi tub and a shower. The one Troy and he had shared had a larger Jacuzzi, eliminating any room for a shower.

Troy wanted the bedroom suite they'd shared for some reason. Justin couldn't figure out why, since all he did was complain about Justin's style of furniture. But he used it as a bargaining chip when it came dealing with Troy's demands. For example, Justin liked the living room furniture, but he told Troy if he wanted the bedroom suite he'd have to agree to take both couches, chairs, and coffee table with him as well. They argued about it far more than Justin or their respective attorneys thought was necessary, but Justin finally conceded, though he let everyone know how upset he was about it. He agreed to let Troy take the bedroom suite and leave the furniture in the living room. He knew fully well that the living room furniture was far too big to fit into the kid's two-bedroom West Hollywood condo where he was moving to.

"You planned that all along, didn't you?" his attorney remarked to him quietly as Troy and his attorney left.

"Troy thinks he's the only one with negotiating skills. I'm just using everything I learned in the time we were together against him in getting what I want."

"You're excellent at it, I must say."

Justin smiled demurely. He adored his attorney, Gloria Underwood, who was also one of his best friends. She couldn't believe that Justin and Troy were divorcing, let alone why. She believed Troy would come to his senses later than sooner, only to realize he'd made one of the biggest mistakes in this life. Many of their other friends thought the same way. As it turned out, that turn of events was closer than anyone might have thought.

The beer was half gone by the time he stripped out of his uniform and got in the shower. The Jacuzzi was plenty large enough for Justin if he wanted to use it, but it didn't compare with the roominess of the shower, big enough for two... and on rare occasions three, when Troy could talk Justin into a three-way. Having someone else in their bed was always Troy's idea, not Justin's. He would have been completely satisfied with Troy and no one else, but he saw the occasional three-ways to keep Troy out of the sex clubs and saunas in the area. Turns out he still frequented both—something he usually did when he traveled for business—but word got back to Justin from mutual friends that Troy was quite the popular guy in various slings around LA.

That was also the reason Justin was adamant that they both stayed on PrEP, even though they stopped having sex before PrEP became available. He didn't want to take any chances of Troy getting sappy about their time together and begging Justin to make love to him. After Troy was out, one of the first things Justin did was moved the furniture from the guest bedroom into the one they'd originally shared. Then he redecorated his new room the way he wanted it and in a completely different style, including a California king mattress. He'd never let on to Troy that he was tired of the style his ex-husband claimed to hate. Evidently, the boy toy went bonkers over the style when he first saw it, which is the only reason Troy wanted to get it in the divorce in the first place.

He looked at himself in the mirror while he was still wet. His reflection showed a fifty-one-year-old who clearly took care of himself. He was at the gym regularly at least three times per week and stayed there at least ninety minutes or more working out, then another fifteen minutes or more in the sauna. The latter was frequently “active.” If it was turning into a bathhouse, he was out of there. His gym, The Gym Connection, had another common name—The Gym Erection.

Justin toweled off the water on the new bath towels he’d splurged on, admitting he could be considered one hot daddy. He really wasn’t a father, as Troy and he had never wanted children. Still, he was embracing the daddy role with guys, regardless of who bottomed and who topped. Being sexually versatile was a wise policy in Justin’s thinking, doubling his chance of hooking up with someone, at least in theory. That, however, hadn’t happened recently, and it was the last thing on his list, although he was an incredibly erotically charged man.

The training he’d been introduced to in erotic and tantric sex came mostly from The New Body Electric School. There, he learned how to incorporate both practices in his sexual relationships and in his self-pleasuring practices—that latter being his mainstay now for several years. This was also the reason he wasn’t an “order out” person. Spectacular sex and intimacy were a buffet event for Justin, not fast food as his best friend preferred, and who often “ordered out.”

However, when pressed on the subject, he’d reluctantly confess that a little fast food never hurt from time-to-time.

He took his beer bottle back to the kitchen to recycle it and grabbed another while he started dinner. He put on an apron—the only thing he was wearing—just in case something might splash hot oil on his naked skin. Frying bacon in the nude was never a smart idea. Since a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich was at the top of his list for dinner, an apron was required.

Justin had just finished his second beer and sat down at the table to eat. Alone and naked, but something he was getting used to. Well, at least the naked part. He wasn’t crazy about being alone. He often joked that being naked was in his genetic makeup. He took one bite out of his sandwich when his cellphone on the counter started buzzing. He put the sandwich back on the plate and checked the caller ID before answering. Grayson.

“Hey, slut. What’s up besides your legs?” he answered without asking.

“Guilty, but at least I’m superb at what—and who—I do, mon cher,” Grayson countered. “Has that nice dick of yours shriveled up and dropped off yet from lack of use?”

Grayson had been Justin’s best friend for much longer than his marriage to Troy. In fact, his friendship with Gray—the name his friend preferred when not trying to be ostentatious, which was seldom—was the longest relationship he’d maintained.

“No, Cuntessa Gracie, I’m saving it for the right man.”

“You mean you’re saving it for your left hand, I do remember you’re right-handed but jackoff with your left—which has never made sense to me. How does it feel with you use your right hand? Do you feel like you’re cheating on your left?”

“Was there a reason you called to interrupt my dinner?”

“Well... no, actually. I just had another five or ten minutes before Mr. Hookup number one shows up and thought I’d kill some... uh... thought I’d call you to see how you were.”

“Hmmm... Number one?”

“Honey... I can’t possibly service all the men in the Los Feliz area, if I was taking them just one per night. I mean I’m excellent, but I’m not *that* great.”

“Of course. How could I have doubted you? I assume you’ve got a decent amount of time between the two of them?”

“I do... as well as additional time between two and three.”

“I’m going to hang up now so you can contact the clinic for your weekly STI testing next week.”

“It’s biweekly now, bitch, so you can take your snide suggestion and stick it... Fuck! He’s early! Gotta run!”

Justin didn’t even get to say goodbye before Gray disconnected the call. He took what was now a cold sandwich to the microwave to warm it up.

Life just doesn’t get any better than this, he thought.