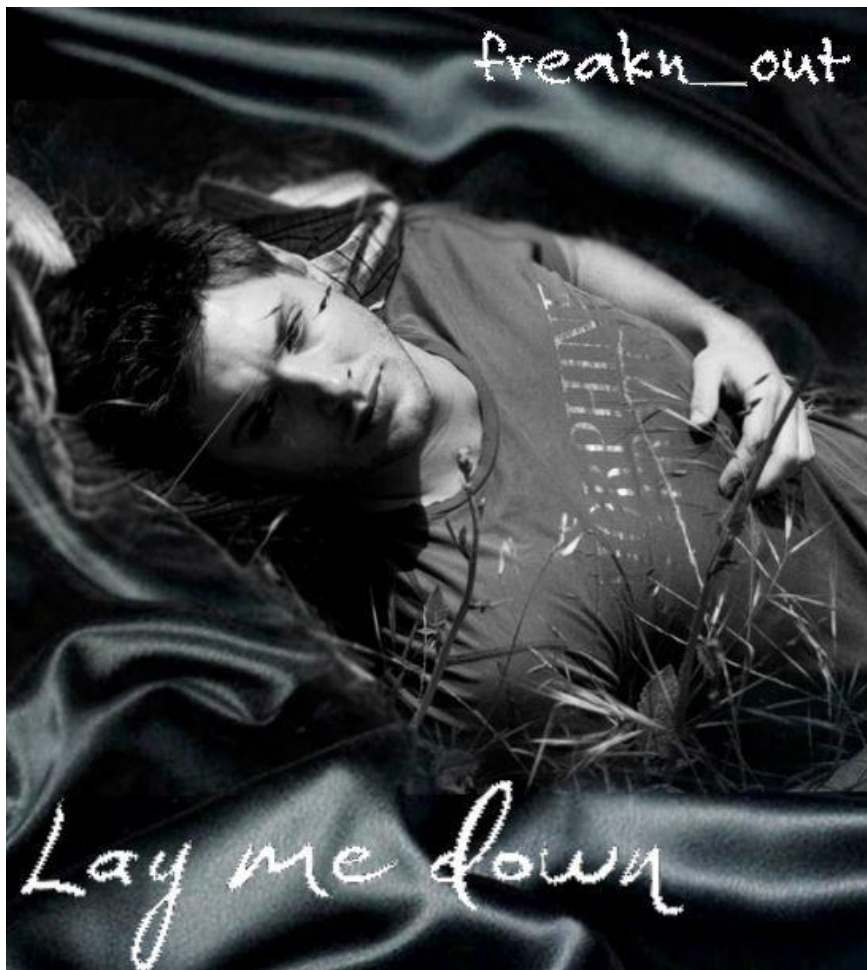


Lay me down:



Jared takes care of his friend after a long day: *Curling up, he tried to sneak surreptitiously closer to Jared's warmth. He'd managed to get close enough to press his nose against Jared's abdomen when a chuckle told him he'd been foiled; but a few moments later, warm arms were slid around him, folding him around Jared's heater-like chest. Letting out a muffled sound, he immediately slipped his fingers beneath Jared's shirt, seeking more of that delicious warmth and pressing icy lips to the side of Jared's neck.*

2,000 words, PG-13, comfort

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Jensen was exhausted in every sense of the word. His muscles burned. The damp layers of clothing were weighing him down, making the beckoning floor appear even closer. Every single one of his limbs was numb. It hurt to move. It hurt to breathe.

He watched as his feet took turns to take the next torturous step, wondering whether he would be able to reach the car before his face had a nasty meeting with the gravelly road.

After swaying precariously, he bent over, hands on thighs as he stopped to gasp a few gulps

of air, giving his aching legs a break.

He couldn't remember a time when he'd ever felt like this. The longing to just sleep; sleep and never wake up, was scary – really scary

Vaguely he thought he could hear something, but he wouldn't be surprised if he was imagining it. Besides, it would take too much effort to turn and try to figure out what the sound was, especially when he was struggling enough to reach the car.

Something warm landed on his shoulder and he was gently spun around, having to peer up at his co-star. "...Jay," he managed to grate out, wincing at the raw scraping in his throat.

Jared's worried eyes met his and a soft voice came from the equally soft-looking lips, "Jen, you okay?"

He wanted to laugh, wanted to, but simply didn't have the energy. He just wanted to go home. Dropping his gaze down to the ground to ease some of the pain in his neck, he flinched when a warm hand covered his forehead. It was so warm, Jensen wanted more, but he couldn't move.

"Shit, Jen, you're like ice."

He didn't say a thing; he couldn't do more than blink at the ground. The hands tugged him out of his jacket.

"Why didn't you change into dry clothes?" murmured the gentle voice as the younger man slipped his own toasty-warm jacket over Jensen's shoulders.

"Wanna go 'ome," he murmured before he could shut himself up. Great, really adult-like, Ackles, you're officially five years old now.

Suddenly he was being led, Jared's arm wrapped around his waist, holding him up, giving him warmth where their skin touched. Unable to function any longer, Jensen just sagged into his friend, letting the younger guy manhandle him into the back of the car.

Jared came in the other side, lifting Jensen slightly – just enough so he could slip beneath – and then lowered Jensen's head on his lap.

It was nice. Wrapped up in Jared's jacket, still warm from the man and smelling of him. Warm and nice: comfy too. Want to stay here. The moment the thought crossed Jensen's mind, he groaned, wondering why exhaustion made his thoughts go weird. He tilted his head slightly to burrow his nose against Jared's thigh and sighed at the pleasant warmth seeping from the gentle fingers as they brushed lightly up and down his back.

Curling up, he tried to sneak surreptitiously closer to Jared's warmth. He'd managed to get close enough to press his nose against Jared's abdomen when a chuckle told him he'd been foiled; but a few moments later, warm arms were sliding around him, folding him around Jared's heater-like chest. Letting out a muffled sound, he immediately slipped his fingers beneath Jared's shirt, seeking more of that delicious warmth and pressing icy lips to the side of Jared's neck.

Jared hissed and cursed at the contact, “Fuck, Jen, you’re like an ice-cube, man.”

Blinking, still trying to figure out why his furnace had disappeared, Jensen murmured, “S’ so cold.”

Jared’s features softened and he shifted to lean against the door, stretching his legs out on the seat, “Come ‘ere,” he murmured gently, and Jensen weighed the options for salvaging his dignity, but it was Jared who was there and Jensen had already lost all dignity with Jared in the past, so he scrambled forwards, wanting to feel warm again, wanting to get rid of the chill that clung inside of him.

He wrapped his arms around Jared’s waist, burrowing his fingers up beneath the shirt, clinging to the bare skin. Jared was wrapped around him like a deliciously scented blanket and the firm chest made an equally nice pillow.

It was only when the car pulled to a halt, that Jensen realized the car had been *moving*. Pulling reluctantly away from his friend, he croaked, “’ee you ‘morrow.”

He tumbled out the door and was shakily getting to his feet when strong arms slipped beneath his own, lifting him up. He batted them away, “’ut it out Jay, not a baby.”

There was a soft chuckle, but the arms didn’t let him go, “Yes, you are. A big one, now come on, let’s get you inside.”

His struggle was pathetically weak but he was simply too tired to do anything more than wriggle slightly. Jared pulled out his own set of keys to unlock the door and Jensen made a mental note to take those back in the future.

The moment his bed came in sight, he bee-lined for it, with the sole aim of sleep on his mind. He grumbled when an arm slid around his waist and intercepted him.

“You can’t go to bed like that: you’ll get pneumonia or something. Come on: let’s get you out of those clothes.”

He knew there was a snarky comment to be made about Jared’s last line, but his brain wasn’t quite working.

Item by item, his clothes were removed, leaving him shivering in the centre of the room wearing only boxers.

After rummaging in one of the drawers nearby, Jared returned waving a pair of clean sweatpants proudly, but instead of placing them in Jensen’s outstretched hand, he headed for the bathroom.

“’m tired, Jay,” a small voice, that seemed to be coming from him, whined.

Jared reappeared in the doorway, smiling softly at him, “Yeah, I know. We just need to get you warmed up again: you’re not getting sick on my watch.”

Letting out a huff, Jensen allowed himself to be tugged towards the quickly filling up bathtub. “Jeez, remind me never to let my mother meet you,” he got out wearily.

With a stunning grin, Jared smirked proudly, “Your mother’s already met me, and she called me a ‘handsome, well-mannered, charming, young fellow who would hopefully rub some appeal off on you.’”

Giving as hard a shove as he could, Jensen mumbled, “You wish,” although that was scarily near the truth.

After carefully checking the temperature, Jared looked up, his mouth opening to say something, but Jensen cut him off, “And no, you’re not going to bathe me, thank you very much.” He could at least attempt to cling onto some of his dignity.

A gleeful grin spread across the young man’s face and he burst out laughing, “Dude, I was just gonna ask if you wanted bubbles or not. But now you mention it, I could always stay...”

His face blooming red, Jensen turned away: “Shut up.”

A warm hand covered his shoulder and Jared spun him back around and squeezed slightly. Jensen’s breath caught at the pain shooting from his muscles, and he couldn’t hold back the wince.

“Shit, Jen, you okay?”

“’m sore,” he mumbled to his feet, feeling as pathetic as he sounded.

Gentle fingers brushed through his hair, making his eyes snap back up. Jared wasn’t laughing. His eyes were soft as he murmured, “Okay, we’ll see about that later. Go have your bath.”

Feeling like an ordered-around teenager, Jensen nearly pouted. Then he realized he was a grown man and the idea of a bath wasn’t unreasonable.

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Half an hour later, feeling even sleepier, Jensen wandered out of the bathroom clad in his sweatpants. Jared was nowhere to be seen so Jensen presumed the man had left already. He completely ignored the bite of disappointment and tumbled facedown onto the bed.

Nearly asleep, he didn’t hear the footsteps, nor did he feel the dip of the bed, so when something touched his shoulder and warm legs straddled him, he twitched.

Equally warm hands began sliding over his skin, kneading firmly but gently at the tensed muscles and Jensen couldn’t hold back a groan. It hurt, but it hurt in a good way. He could feel the pain seeping away as Jared’s hands did their magic.

“’t’s good, Jay. Mmm’real good.”

Jared continued his firm massage until Jensen's muscles were completely slack and then the touch became gentler, focused purely on making Jensen feel good. Lightly running his fingers over bare skin, he stroked along Jensen's spine, sending shivers through the older man.

Fingers sliding down his sides, a warm weight resting over his ass, and feeling so damn good, Jensen's defenses were lowered, his brain malfunctioning with the overwhelming affection he felt for his friend, something which he normally forced himself to bury. Reaching down to grasp Jared's hand in his and pressing their entwined hands down on the mattress above his head, forcing Jared to close the distance between their bodies, he let out a relaxed sigh.

Now flush against Jensen's back, the younger man froze, "Jen?"

Too tired to decipher the meaning behind why he wanted his friend pressed against him, Jensen just murmured, "Let's sleep."

Feeling some tension seep out of Jared, Jensen shifted around, rolling the younger man off him, and promptly using him as a pillow.

Snuggling closer, he buried his nose against Jared's skin, breathing in the familiar and yet foreign scent and relaxing further. He felt Jared shifting around beneath him and let out a murmured complaint, swinging both an arm and a leg over the man, pressing him down slightly.

There was a chuckle, followed by more wriggling. He was about to raise his head to tell Jared to lie the fuck still and be a good pillow when the duvet cover was draped over them.

So that's why he was moving. Huh. Good pillow after all.

Tightening his leg around the other man's, he squeezed himself closer.

Feeling so tired, so relaxed, so warm, and so cared for, Jensen's mouth ran away with him.

"Love you."

There was silence, punctuated only by the soft sounds of their breathing. Jensen squeezed his eyes shut tightly, hoping he wouldn't be shoved too far: he wasn't sure he'd ever move again, and pressed his nose closer to Jared's neck.

Beneath him, he slowly felt Jared beginning to relax. Then the arm around Jensen curled protectively around his shoulders and lips brushed lightly over his forehead.

Breathing out against his skin, Jared murmured, "Yeah, you too."

His eyes sliding shut, Jensen allowed those words to seep over him. He knew something big had just happened; knew that in the morning they'd have to work the details out. But that didn't matter at the moment. Raising himself up slightly, he brushed his lips over Jared's, peering down at his friend and returning his smile.

They'd be okay.

They had to be.

They were them.

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