



# 10 INCHES

BESTSELLING AUTHOR  
STEPHANIE BROTHER

**10 INCHES**

**A REVERSE HAREM ROMANCE**

**STEPHANIE BROTHER**

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## DESCRIPTION

**Ten men, a beach house, and a question to answer: Does size really matter?**

When my boss asks me to write an article on the age-old question of the importance of D-size, I stifle an eye-roll. This isn't what I imagined I'd be doing after years of journalism classes.

But when she presents me with the keys to an exclusive beach house, and the personal details of the ten men she's lined up for me to interview, my eyes practically bug out of my head.

It isn't only because they're hotter than the surface of the sun, or tall and broad enough to form a Great-Wall-of-Man. It isn't because between them, they have more ink than a bookstore. It isn't even because each of them is packing ten inches or more, although that does raise a perfectly arched eyebrow.

It's the way my boss winks when she says the word *interview*, as though her expectation of the depth of my investigation should be way beyond standard reporting.

I'm a flustered mess when they all arrive at the beach house.

Carson and Clay are tattoo artists who can't stop staring at my virgin skin.

Russell and Tom are ex-military men looking for adventure on home soil.

Jimmy and Jonas are personal trainers with a very personal touch.

Oliver and Stefan are senior executives at two prestigious advertising agencies, making them as rich as they are sexy. And Theron and Gabe build houses for a living with their bare hands!

They're a veritable buffet of delicious manly goodness.

They tantalize me with what it would be like to experience ten men and ten times ten inches until I'm achy and needy and more desperate to know the answer to the size question than I've ever been about anything, ever!

And when they find out how innocent I am, they decide I need to be taught many, many mind-blowing lessons about how to handle so much man.

Ten men, seven days and one intriguing question. Will I find the answer?

10 INCHES is a Reverse Harem Romance with a happy ever after ending. It's book 8 in the Multiple Love Series of standalone romances with characters who continue to make appearances!

## ALLIE

“Allie, I have a new assignment for you. Take a seat.” Kirsty, my boss, peers at me over her computer screen. As I opt for the chair nearest the window, she continues to type so furiously I worry about the health of her keyboard. I stare out at the world outside the Fine Line Magazine office building, desperate to escape into the sunshine. My best friend Dawn is enjoying her new life in Australia, and I can’t help but feel a bucketful of slick green envy.

“Right.” Kirsty pushes back from her desk and shoves her sexy librarian glasses up her perfectly straight nose like she means business. She fixes me with her piercing blue eyes, making no attempt to hide her assessment of my colorful outfit and yellow stilettos. A flare of her nostrils and a purse of her lips tells me all I need to know. I allow my notebook to flop open and press the top of my pen in readiness to take notes, even though the thought of writing another article about sex fills me with dread.

“Hit me.” I try to sound excited, even adding a grin which feels tight on my face. Thankfully, Kirsty seems convinced.

“Does size matter?” Her arms spread wide as though she’s trying to illustrate the point.

“I’ve heard it matters a lot,” I mumble.

“You’ve heard?” Kirsty raises a perfectly arched eyebrow above the rim of her glasses and fluffs her platinum blonde bob with one hand.



“Yes. You know. The girl version of locker room talk.”

“That’s what I’m talking about,” Kirsty says. “Men are so open about what they want in a woman. Any woman could put together an ideal version of women according to men. I mean, it’s blonde hair, blue eyes, big breasts, narrow waist, curvy hips and ass.” She lists attributes, folding down her fingers as she goes, seemingly unaware that she’s describing herself. Of course, she’s very aware that I’m missing many of the required attributes. “But women don’t generally talk about what they need and want from men. It’s all a big mystery.”

“And you want to get to the bottom of the size question?”

“It’s a four-page spread,” she says. “Front cover feature. I want interviews from both sides, and it needs a personal feel. This isn’t an article where you can just provide observations. I want to hear from you too, Allie.”

“Me?”

“Yes. I mean, you’re young, free, and single. You must have a whole lot to say about this topic?”

My jaw drops open as Kirsty stares at me, waiting for a response that I can’t find the words to provide. She’s suggesting I’m very sexually active, and if I was a man, that wouldn’t be a problem. But I’m a woman, and her suggestion feels like a negative accusation. Does she really think I’m promiscuous? There are other words for women who sleep around that I don’t even want to think about, let alone say out loud. The unfair double standard around sex fills me with rage, but that doesn’t mean it hasn’t been implanted in my head just a little.

“I don’t know what kind of personal element I can add,” I say slowly, bringing my pen to my lips and biting down on the warm plastic.

“Don’t be coy, Allie. It doesn’t suit you.” Kirsty reaches into her drawer and pulls out an envelope. She slides a bunch of keys from the top and spins them on her manicured finger. “These are the keys to a gorgeous beach house. And here are the details of the men you’re going to interview. You have seven days to research.”

I must look confused because Kirsty stands and thrusts the envelope towards me. I slide out the sheets of paper inside and my eyes bug out at the photograph of the gorgeous man on the top. Carson, it reads, and then there’s a long description; his job, his appearance, his interests, and at the top, his stats. Ten inches, it reads. Ten. Fucking. Inches.

“They’re all ten inches.” Kirsty’s red lips pinch as though she’s battling a smile. “If I was a little younger, I’d be fighting you to the death for this assignment.”

I flick through the rest of the men, taking in broad white smiles, twinkling eyes, and tattoos. They’re a buffet of hotness. A party platter of deliciousness. A dessert cart of temptation. Jesus.

“So, I’m going to interview them at the beach house?”

“They’re going to stay with you for seven days.”

“Stay?”

“You can thank me next week.” Kirsty’s already turned back to her computer. “I take it you know enough women to gather the female input for the article?”

I nod, my mind spinning through the favor I'm going to ask Dawn. She mentioned the reverse harem ladies club her friend Kyla is a part of. There must be women there who'll be happy to talk to me about this. I don't need to feature their names, just their anonymous opinions on the importance of dick size.

As I rise from my chair, my stomach feels like it's dropped through my intestines. For the one millionth time, I wonder what the hell I'm doing. This isn't what I went to college to achieve, but I have bills to pay, and monster-sized student loans to clear. Writing articles about genitals and the humans attached to them for Fine Line Magazine is the best paid gig I can find. My parents keep telling me to focus on the money. I'm constantly reminded that I don't have the means to pick and choose what I write about, but it doesn't feel good to suppress all the hopes I had about making a difference in the world.

"Clear your diary, Allie," Kirsty says firmly as I reach the doorway to her office. "I need you on this tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" There's no way she's put together all the arrangements today. She must have known what she had planned for me and didn't share it until the last minute. Ugh. Either she believes I have no life, or she doesn't care that I have one she's about to mess up. I mean, what would happen if I had a boyfriend? He wouldn't exactly be dancing with happiness about this arrangement.

It's probably a good thing I put the 's' firmly into single.

"Your ten men are arriving at the beach house tomorrow. You need to be there to welcome them."

My ten men? “Okay.”

She nods curtly. “Enjoy your *interviews*.” The last word is said with long drawn-out emphasis before she winks. She actually winks. It’s like witnessing a Gorgon crack a smile.

“I’ll try.” Shuddering as I round the corner, I inhale deeply and try to blow out my tension. It’s not that I’m scared of my boss. Not at all. She’s formidable, but not unreasonable. It’s just that every step I take in this job brings me further from the path I want to be on, and the distance between me and my dreams makes my heart thud weirdly and my palms sweat.

At my desk, I place the keys for the beach house next to my water bottle and tip out the contents of the envelope. I find the address of the beach house first. It’s two hours’ drive away and on a stretch of coastline I’ve always wanted to visit. The pictures of where I’m going to be staying for the next week are breathtaking; high ceilings and a modern interior combined with an outdoor pool and entertaining area that are impressive enough to host a bougie wedding party.

Beneath the property description, I find Carson’s profile again. Just looking at his photo makes my cheeks hot. Maybe it’s his shaved head and strong jawline, or his blue eyes that stare into mine with as much intensity as if he was standing before me. Maybe it’s reading about his occupation as a tattoo artist and the way my mind immediately imagines the ink on his skin. But it’s probably the highlighted statement of his dick size that makes my face heat to the shade of a sun ripened tomato.

Ten Inches.

How is that even a physical possibility? There's a ruler standing in a pot on my desk and the ten-inch marker seems impossibly high. What would that look like, standing straight like a baton or a nightstick? What would Carson look like naked, covered only in tattoos, holding his ten-inch cock like a weapon?

A god of war.

A man who could destroy cities and rebuild them with his own bare hands.

And I'm a ridiculous woman with too much imagination who can't look at a man naked without bursting into flames.

None of my friends know I'm still a virgin. If Dawn found out, I think her head would explode. She has nine boyfriends. Nine. The amount of sex that girl must be having shouldn't be legal. I probably won't achieve a years worth of her sexual exploits in my lifetime.

It's not that I'm a prude.

Far from it.

It's just that I've been so busy with my studies and work that I've never taken the time to lift my head to check out the available men. This office isn't exactly throbbing with hot prospects. The thing with writing for a women's magazine is it tends to be women who are interested enough in the subject matter to write it. Brian from the mailroom and Colin from accounting aren't setting anybody's loins ablaze. The absence of male eye candy hasn't done me any favors. Now, just a photo of a hot man is enough to make me flustered. If I can't even look at Carson's photo without combusting, how the hell

am I going to cope with living with ten men for seven days and interviewing them about their dicks?

My boss really hasn't chosen the best candidate for this job.

Maybe I should tell her to find someone else. I could nudge Grace or Rihanna in her direction. Both of them would eat this assignment up like a caramel sundae.

I lift Carson's profile to find Clay's beneath. I skip over the ten inches part because that's now become an expectation. Imagine! He's leaner than Carson, but still muscular, with long wavy blond hair that he's drawn back into a bun. He has hazel eyes that twinkle and dimples which make him ooze mischief and so many tattoos they all merge into a giant block of color.

Russell is next, a veteran with short cropped dark hair and a strong jaw. His green eyes seem to hold a mix of determination and reflectiveness. I imagine his hands are huge and rough with calluses that would make my toes curl if they caressed the right places on my body.

Tom is also ex-military, but there's something warm about him, a kindness to his face, and a close-cropped beard that gives him an air of maturity.

Jimmy seems younger. I check out his date of birth to find out that he's only twenty-four. With sun-kissed skin and ice-blue eyes, the personal trainer exudes health and youth.

Jonas is also a personal trainer, and I suddenly notice a pattern in their jobs. Two men from each occupation. His smile is charismatic, and his crooked nose gives him a rougher, more experienced appearance.

The next two men, Oliver and Stefan, both hold senior positions in ad agencies I'm familiar with. With their white shirts and dark suits, they both seem sophisticated and suave. Oliver is the oldest of the men so far. At forty-one, he already has a dusting of silver in his dark hair, and a straight Romanesque nose that makes him appear serious. In contrast, Stefan has laughter lines etched at the corners of his green eyes, and refined features that perfectly match his charming smile.

Theron and Gabe are the last men and both work in construction. Theron is the taller of the two with a rugged face, dark hair and mesmerizing light eyes that make me feel like I could fall into them. Gabe has a warm smile that instantly puts me at ease and a hint of gentleness in eyes that are almost the same color as mine.

By the time I've finished reading all the profiles, my body temperature has increased enough that I use the last one to fan myself cool. My cheeks must be radiating like beacons. This is not a good sign at all.

"What's wrong with you?" Grace asks as she passes my desk clutching a steaming mug. "You look like my mom in the middle of one of her hot flashes."

"I don't know," I lie. "Maybe I'm getting sick."

"Love sick?" she snickers, peering at my desk and I'm too slow to cover the photos on the profiles that are strewn messily in front of me. "I heard you're out on a smoking hot assignment for seven days."

I quickly gather the profiles and she quirks one perfectly plucked eyebrow as she folds her lips between her teeth,

biting her smile.

“Who has time for love in this place?” I say, ignoring the mention of where I’m going to be for a week. “There’s barely any point in me paying rent right now, I spend so little time at home.”

“I’m with you there. Maybe we should start one of those arrangements where we apartment-share with someone who works nights. They made a movie with that plot...what was it called?”

“Yeah...maybe not. There’s no way I’d want to share a bed with a stranger.”

“Sounds like most of your Saturday nights.” Rianna breezes past, clutching a bundle of papers. “Awesome assignment. I’m jealous.”

“I’m socializing for all of us,” Grace grins lasciviously. “But I have a feeling that you’re going to be making up for your hermit tendencies next week.”

“I’m interviewing,” I say. “How exciting can it get?”

Grace raises both her brows this time and looks pertinently at the bundle of profiles I’m doing my best to hide. “From the look of those men, it could get to incendiary levels of excitement if you let it.”

“Yeah, that’s not going to happen. Kirsty would kill me.”

“What happens at the beach house, stays at the beach house,” Grace says, revealing she knows a whole lot more about my assignment than I assumed.



“If you know so much, how come you’re not the one going?”

“The beefcakes are all yours. I have a wedding. Can’t get out of it!”

“I’m not sure that’s a very PC way of referring to men.”

“Well, I’m not very PC.” She leans in, checking her mug to make sure she’s not about to slosh boiling liquid all over me. “If you don’t make the most of this assignment and come back with at least a phone number and the promise of a date, I’m going to make you buy me lunch for the rest of the year.”

“I guess I’m buying lunch then.”

Grace sways off in the direction of her desk, shaking her head like I’m the world’s biggest disappointment.

But even as I try to deny that the idea that living a little dangerously isn’t something I’ve considered, my eyes drift back to the photo of Theron on top of the pile, and my heart skitters in my chest.

Who am I kidding?

Certainly not Grace, and definitely not myself!

## ALLIE

My heart is racing as I cruise into the sweeping paved driveway of the beach house, taking in the modern exterior and beautiful exotic planting that helps to conceal the building from the street. It's standing proud on a large plot, but as I step out of my car, I get a glimpse of the equally impressive house next door.

Who is rich enough to own these beachfront properties? No one I know.

The keys weigh heavy in my hand, and I'm already nervous about going inside. I know the men aren't here yet. They've been provided with an arrival time in a couple of hours, which will give me enough of an opportunity to settle in and familiarize myself with the place. My nerves come from feeling daunted by the luxury. My family home could fit into this place twenty times, and that's no exaggeration. I'm not a trust fund baby, and I certainly haven't mixed in the kind of circles that aren't phased by this level of excess.

Not for the first time, I wish I had a friend with me. If Dawn was here, she'd be squealing and running around like a kid in a candy store. She'd be diving into the pool in her clothes and then sprinting barefoot down to the ocean to wade into the surf. In contrast, I drag my small suitcase up to the front door, twist the key to open the lock and take a deep breath to steady the butterflies that are free flying in my chest cavity.

Seriously. I need to take a chill pill before I have a heart attack. If I can't even enter an empty house without combusting, how the hell am I going to manage to meet and greet ten gorgeous men who are here to share all their most intimate details with me?

I should have bought some thicker coverage foundation to conceal my blazing inferno cheeks. At least I have my sunglasses to hide behind a little. Last night I put them on in front of the mirror to check out how transparent the lenses are. They're big enough to hide the top part of my cheeks where I always blush the hardest, and opaque enough to hide my eyes. The alarm begins to beep and I find it concealed behind an ornate mirror and tap in the code to disarm it.

My feet echo on the herringbone hardwood flooring that stretches right through the huge open space. It's starkly decorated, with plain white walls and minimalist art and furniture, but the floor to ceiling doors that open onto the pool area frame a stretch of warm blue ocean beyond that takes my breath away.

My suitcase and purse are left in a heap by the door as I drift towards the view, mesmerized by the soft ripples of the cerulean water and the occasional appearance of a foam-topped wave. Forget the man-made beauty. This view is worth all the money in the world.

I've always been drawn to the ocean. My happiest childhood memories involve days out at the beach. My mom was always mystified as to how I could entertain myself for hours by simply paddling in the shallows, watching the way the water would lap at my ankles and the sand would cover

my toes. She'd joke that maybe I was a fish in a past life, or a crab.

Maybe when I'm through with this life, I'll get a chance to return to the ocean again.

My phone rings in my pocket, jolting me from my reverie. I fumble to pull it from the back of my smart black pants, scanning the screen for caller ID. It's Kirsty.

"Hey boss." I think my effort to force brightness into my tone sounds natural. "I just arrived."

"You can thank me now," Kirsty says. "It's a beautiful place isn't it?"

I touch the glass, reaching for just the tiniest bit of contact with the view. "It is spectacular."

"I just wanted to let you know that there's going to be a food delivery arriving soon. The interview subjects have filled out questionnaires with dietary preferences and restrictions so there should be something for everyone. I've even included some bottles of wine, beer, and champagne to loosen tongues. You can thank me again."

"Thank you, Kirsty," I sing-song, rolling my eyes. My boss would fit perfectly into this property. Her dad's a hedge fund manager, and she's wealthy enough to never need to work, but I guess she enjoys forcing her employees into mortifying situations too much to lounge by the pool for a living.

"I can feel your nerves through the phone, Allie. Maybe you should have a few glasses of champagne before they arrive. The trick with this assignment is in helping everyone to feel relaxed enough to open up and reveal their deepest, darkest

secrets and experiences. You won't do that if you're trembling like a frightened nun."

"I may just do that," I say. "Couldn't you have found some less attractive well-hung men for me to interview? I'm sure there are plenty of sixty plus dudes who are packing. At least then, all the conversation would be gross."

"I forgot to mention that there's a photographer coming at some point to take some shots of the *process*." She emphasizes the last word, and I can imagine her making mental air quotes around the word.

"Please tell me you're not expecting me to be in the photos." The thought of posing makes me cringe.

"You need to be in at least one. The whole idea of having the interviews conducted in such a spectacular setting is to make the article aspirational. I've chosen men who'll look good by the pool and on the beach to make all the interesting tidbits you're going to discover titillating."

"Yeah. I can see how that will make it more interesting," I muse, drifting into the part of the cavernous space which feels like it could be a kitchen. There's no sink, refrigerator, or stove on show, just a long dark stone counter above dark wood cabinets and a stretch of floor to ceiling matching doors that run along the back wall. I test-push a door and it pops open to reveal a cupboard filled with glasses, plates, bowls, and mugs.

Bingo.

The next door pops out, but I have to slide it along to reveal the sink and stove, and a coffee machine that's so shiny and

large, it would rival Starbucks in sophistication.

“I should go,” I say, before my mind can catch up with my tongue. There’s too much to do before the army of jumbo sausage-packers arrives, and I need to get my shit together.

“Okay, Allie. I’ll call you to check in later.”

“How about tomorrow?” I say quickly, biting my lip when I realize how abrupt I sound. “I’ll have a chance to sound them all out by then.”

Kirsty clicks her pen in quick succession, the way she always does when I frustrate her. “Tomorrow then.”

We say our goodbyes and I leave my phone on the cool countertop, drifting around to check out the seating area with four long, low, tan leather couches and a table that feels more like a solid wood art installation than a functional piece of furniture. The stairs are stark and made from the same light wood as the flooring. They stretch without a handrail into the upper part of the house which I explore, finding room after room of the same huge beds dressed with crisp white linens. On top, they are decorated with dark green pillows that contrast against the dark wood headboards and tie in with the prolific number of houseplants that bring life and vibrancy to the house.

I choose a room for myself that’s at the end of the hallway, wanting to be as far from the strangers that I’m being forced to live with as I can be. It’s not the largest room, but it has a corner view that sweeps across the full stretch of beach and overlooks the house next door a little. I perch on the edge of the bed and watch a family enjoying their pool. One pretty woman with a neat blonde bob plays with two little boys.

Three men sit at the edge of the pool, joining in with the kids, splashing and tossing a ball back and forth. On two pool loungers, an older man and woman recline. The man is on the phone and the woman is reading a book. It's a sweet scene of a multigenerational family spending time together, and I'm filled with a pang of emptiness that takes me by surprise.

Yes, I've been conscious of the fact that my friends are all rushing to settle down around me and I'm nowhere near even finding a date for a Saturday night. As an only child, family time has always felt a little one dimensional. My parents live hours from where I've had to settle to be close to my job. We speak on the phone each week, but the longer I'm away and not seeing them in person, the more disconnected I feel. This week will be filled with more social interaction than I've had since leaving college.

As anxious as I am about the task in front of me, I'm also intrigued. What kind of men would sign up for an assignment like this?

Arrogant men, probably. Cocky assholes who get a kick out of telling everyone about what a big cock they have. Maybe perverts who get off on the idea of talking about their cock with a woman. Ugh. I can't stand arrogance, and perverts need to be tossed on an island somewhere where they can't bother anyone else.

The chances of them being decent guys is slim.

I stand, smoothing my pants, and glance at my watch. Only ninety-minutes to go and then I need to become the hostess with the mostest. If only there was an easy switch for that.

I hurry down the stairs and grab my suitcase and purse, lugging them back up to my room. I freshen up a little, powdering my nose and brushing my hair. At least it looks shiny and straight thanks to my new 'perfect for brunettes' shampoo and conditioner. Half the time, the claims made by beauty products turn out to be wild exaggerations but this one actually worked out for a change.

My sleeveless canary-yellow blouse is pretty but formal, and I want to make a serious impression to keep this week on the right track. I fold in my lips to moisten them and blow out a long breath. Who am I kidding? What I really need this week is some fun. I need to get this stupid article done and dusted and have a few days of rest and relaxation in the sun. I have all my fingers and toes crossed that there will be at least a couple of men in this group who won't be terrible to hang out with. If Kirsty thinks it's fine to disrupt my life at a moment's notice, I won't feel too guilty for having a mini vacation at her expense.

My traitorous brain flicks back through the images of the men like it's referencing a hot-man Rolodex, and my even more traitorous pussy flutters with arousal. As well as fun, what I really, really need is some hot sex.

But that's not going to happen. Not when my professional name is on the line.

I may not like my current job or the monotony of the subject matter I have to write about, but I do want to remain on the right side of journalistic integrity.

As I'm unzipping my suitcase to retrieve my clothes and hang them in the closet, an unfamiliar doorbell rings.



Whoever it is, is early and I'm still mentally unprepared.

The hallway is like an echo chamber and my feet thud against the flooring as I rush to the stairs. The bell rings again, telling me the new arrival is impatient as well as punctual. If I had to guess who it would be, I'd say one of the military guys, or maybe one of the advertising professionals.

As I reach the door, a giant wave of heat runs right through me, making sweat prickle beneath my arms and across my upper lip. Shit.

Flustered and sweaty isn't the look de jour.

I grab the door handle, with no time to calm myself, and find six men gathered outside.

Six.

"Hey." My eyes sweep across the real physical manifestations of the men I've only had the pleasure of seeing in photographs, and damn, those mugshots didn't do any of them justice.

Even with the baseball caps and sunglasses some of them are wearing, I'm overwhelmed by how big and gorgeous they all are.

"Allie?" the one nearest me asks.

"Yes, sorry. I'm Allie. Come in." Pulling the door wide open, I wait for each of them to pass, carrying or wheeling their luggage through before leaving it against the wall. Not only do they look good, but they also smell amazing.

Overwhelmed, I glance outside at the driveway, which has become a parking lot for a jumble of vehicles that look

ridiculous next to each other. A huge pickup truck dwarfs a sleek silver sports car. There's a Prius, a Mini, and an estate with a dog cage in the back.

As I close the door, I can already feel my palm is sweaty, so I quickly wipe it on my pants, worried they're going to want to shake my hand.

"Wow...this place is more beautiful in reality and I didn't think that would be possible." The man speaking drifts towards the view in the same way I did, removing his sunglasses and hooking them into the neck of his gray shirt. His arms are covered in a lattice of tattoos which look ominous from a distance, and his body is solid and bulky, but it's his shaved hair that I recognize the most from his pictures. Putting all the puzzle pieces together, I think he's Carson, the tattoo artist.

"It really is, isn't it?" Before I have a chance to follow, another man thrusts his hand out.

"I'm Russell," he says.

His handshake is firm but not uncomfortable, as though he's taken in my smaller frame and adapted his grip, a kindness I'm grateful for. I was right about his rough hands, too. Russell also has short, cropped hair but seems stockier and more solidly built than Carson. His piercing green eyes hold mine without wavering, intense and determined.

"Welcome," I say, as I release his strong palm.

Another man steps in to shake my hand, dressed smartly in a crisp white dress shirt and navy slacks. His skin is sun-kissed, probably from playing golf or jetting off to a luxury Caribbean

resort. I bet the sports car in the driveway is his. “Oliver?” I guess, and he smiles broadly, happy that he’s memorable enough for me to recall. It’s cute that he’s not arrogant enough to expect it.

“Yes. I’m Oliver. Stefan is on his way.”

“You know each other?”

He nods as he draws away his well-manicured hand. “Our industry is incestuous.”

“I wondered if you were arriving in pairs,” I say, glancing over at the other men still waiting to introduce themselves. Carson has returned from his wandering and is now standing at the back of the group.

“Pairs?” Russell queries. “How come?”

“Well, there are ten of you staying for the week, from five occupations. I thought the recruiter might have been lazy and found friendship pairs.”

“I recommended Stefan.” Oliver rolls his eyes when a few of the men snicker. It takes me a couple of seconds to realize the snickering is about the fact that Oliver must have known Stefan’s dick size. For the first time, it strikes me that I expected all the men involved in this study to be heterosexual. I mean, it’s a woman’s magazine after all. But maybe I was wrong to make that assumption. Maybe Oliver and Stefan are lovers?”

“Are you a couple?” I ask, blushing at my abruptness. In any other circumstance, it would be a very personal question for me to ask, but these men are here specifically to share all their intimate details.

“No,” Oliver says firmly. “We used to work at the same agency and dated the same woman. You get to hear things.”

“Cock gossip,” Carson says. “Classy.”

“Cock gossip is a thing wherever you go, especially when there is something big to talk about,” the next man says, as Oliver moves aside. His eyes are the color of storm clouds, but his smile is warm and engaging. His crooked nose is what I remember the most and what gives him the look of a bare-knuckle boxer from the nineteen hundreds.

“Jonas,” I guess.

“Absolutely,” he grins. “And my buddy Jimmy is also on his way. We used to play sports together in high school which is why he knew to recommend me for this gig too.”

“Am I the only one here who doesn’t know anyone?” Russell asks.

“I know Clay. We’ve been neighbors since childhood. We practically lived in each other’s houses until I was old enough to get my own place.” Carson steps forward to take my hand. He doesn’t shake it, though. This time I receive a press of soft lips against my knuckles, combined with some intense ocean-blue eye contact. Wow! Of all the men, I think Carson is going to be the most trouble.

A shiver passes through me before Carson pulls his mouth away, and his smile is broad and knowing as he straightens. He felt my reaction to him and liked it.

I trap my lip between my teeth as I draw my hand away and offer it to one of the other waiting men, not wanting Carson to feel like I’m lingering on him after his presumptuous kiss.

The next two men step forward together as though they have a coordinated way of moving. "I'm Theron," the first says, "and this is my cousin Gabe." He shakes my hand and tips his head to the right to indicate the man next to him. His palm is huge and as rough as sandpaper and I immediately remember that he's one of the contractors. Gabe is equally built and extends a hand that looks like it could crack a skull in a single grip.

"It's great to meet you all," I say. "And thanks so much for being on time. Not that we're short of time."

Theron nods. "Do you usually do interviews this way...you know...over so many days?"

Shaking my head, I take a step back, scanning the huge space we're going to be sharing. "To be honest, this is the first time for me too! I only learned I was going to be handling this assignment yesterday, so you'll need to bear with me."

"Yesterday?" Olive's tone is shocked. "I've been scheduled to attend this thing for a couple of weeks."

"Me too," Carson says. "Why do you think they left it to the last minute to tell you about it?"

"I'm not sure." I don't want to lie but I am cautious about revealing too much office politics. "But don't worry. I've been working for the magazine for three years. I know this stuff inside and out."

As soon as the words are out of my mouth, I blush profusely. I just admitted I'm a pro when it comes to dicks. What an imbecile! This assignment is going to be the death of me.

Before the men have a chance to ask me any more questions, the doorbell rings again.

“No rest for the wicked,” I say. “Make yourselves at home and I’ll see who it is.”

## ALLIE

I expect to open the door to find more men, and I do. One looks familiar, and one is wearing a uniform and is wheeling a large cart filled with groceries. "Delivery for Allie," he says brightly.

"Err...yes...that's me."

The waiting man steps aside while the delivery guy struggles up the steps and into the wide entrance way. "Where do you want it?" he asks.

"Come in," I tell the other man, "And give me a second."

I lead the delivery driver into the kitchen area and begin opening the sleek cupboards so that I can unload the food. Theron and Gabe immediately come to my assistance. "Don't worry about this," Theron says. "We'll handle it."

As they begin to lift boxes of beers onto the counter, more of the men swarm forward to see what they're going to be eating and drinking for the next seven days. Typical. What do they say about men? The way to their hearts is through their stomachs. Well, at least whoever Kirsty tasked with organizing the logistics of this trip has the important part sorted.

"Sorry about that," I say, finally reaching the man standing by the door. This place is so huge I'm going to hit my ten thousand steps target in no time. "I'm Allie. Welcome to the madhouse!"

“Tom,” he says, extending his hand. He’s the other veteran, and he’s certainly rugged and built like a soldier, but his handshake is gentle, and his smile is warm and open. With medium brown curly hair that flops over his forehead, he’s left the regimented style behind with his uniform and gun, unlike Russell.

“Thanks for coming,” I say. “This is all a little crazy right now with everyone arriving.” I turn to the group and find Oliver opening a bottle of champagne and Carson taking a grateful swig from a bottle of bud. “Everyone, this is Tom.”

There’s a rumble of voices communicating different welcomes. “Beer or champagne?” Oliver asks.

“Beer for sure,” Tom replies and drifts over to the group, asking for names and shaking hands. Men always seem to have an easier time introducing themselves and bonding than women. With sports as the icebreaker, most guys can find something in common.

I watch from a distance, feeling like a kindergarten teacher in charge of a new class of kids, hoping desperately that they’re all going to get along.

“There’s more in the truck,” the driver says. “I was wondering how many people this was going to feed.” His brows quirk in the middle and he looks me up and down, practically stripping the clothes from my body in the process. Ugh. Either he’s a perv or he thinks he’s figured out what’s going on here. Numerous men and one woman in a luxury beachfront property. This setup has the whiff of a porn shoot about it, but I definitely don’t look like a traditional porn star.



My boobs are too small and my lips too thin. And I don't have that long, gently curled hair that they all seem to have.

But the men behind me all have the looks and bodies to fit right into male or female gaze fantasies. Shit. I need my sunglasses to handle the brilliant glare of their collective attractiveness.

"Yes, there are a lot of us." I stride toward the door, holding my back straight and my chin high and keeping my tone clipped and professional. I'm a journalist, not an adult entertainer. We may be here to discuss X-rated content, but that doesn't mean anything else is going to happen.

As I briskly pull the door open, a man practically falls into me, his eyes wide with surprise. "Shit." He grabs my shoulders, trying to stabilize us both, and then laughs loudly. "That's what I call an entrance," he says. "You scared the shit out of me."

"Sorry...it's chaos here with people arriving and the food delivery happening simultaneously."

His ice-blue eyes crinkle at the edges, and he releases his warm grip on my shoulders. "I'm Jimmy. And don't stress about the chaos. We're here to have some fun."

Fun is exactly what I need, and Jimmy's warm smile and the way he bounces slightly on his toes as he takes in the luxury behind me reminds me of a cartoon tiger from those cute kids' movies.

Another two men climb the steps behind Jimmy as the delivery driver smirks at me. I guess Jimmy's mention of the word fun confirmed what he thinks he knows, and I give up on

worrying about his opinions and concentrate on greeting the final of my interviewees. Clay is the other tattoo artist, and Stefan is Oliver's advertising exec friend. They're both as sexy as their pictures. My face hurts from smiling too much and my head is light from the buzz of meeting so many new, attractive people simultaneously.

As I encourage them to join the meet and greet inside, I focus on the creepy delivery driver, asking him to leave the final bags and boxes just inside rather than let him go deeper into the house. I have to sign for the delivery, and when I finally close the door at his back, I'm relieved beyond belief and surprised to find that all the shopping has all been taken to the kitchen and dealt with.

And here I was thinking that I was going to need to step up and take care of these ten men.

I guess unpacking heavy shopping is something they're happy to do. I wonder if they'll be interested in meeting our huge catering needs or handling the cleaning up after. Or maybe Kirsty has arranged for a chef and a maid to handle those parts. I should call to find out the necessary details. The absence of any kind of summary of what's going to happen isn't exactly enhancing my professional appearance.

I bite my lip, watching Russell empty some chips into a bowl, and Jimmy twist the top off a bottle of beer. Stefan already has a glass of champagne, and Clay is too busy laughing with Carson to bother with a drink.

It feels awkward to interpret the fledgling bromances that are forming before my very eyes, but I don't have to because Gabe glances away from Theron and notices I'm standing at a

distance from the group and immediately seeks to rectify the situation.

“Allie, what are you drinking?”

“I think I should stick to juice,” I say. “And get started on what we’re here for.”

“All work and no play makes Allie a...” Jonas sings, getting interrupted by a punch on the shoulder from Jimmy.

“Leave the girl alone. She’s got business here. We’re the ones who are here to party.”

“How about a compromise?” Oliver pours half a glass of champagne and tops it with orange juice. He holds it out to me across the counter and, rather than object and cause a disagreement, I decide to accept. A small mimosa isn’t going to hurt. In fact, it might help ease out some of the tension from my shoulders and the nerves from my belly.

“Thanks. This is perfect.”

“Point one to Oliver,” Carson says, nodding his head in a way that suggests he’s confirmed something in his mind.

“Who’s keeping score, and what’s the criteria?” Russell asks, squaring his shoulders, ready for competition.

“No one’s keeping score.” Stefan raises his free hand to emphasize, and a murmur spreads through the group. I frown, wondering what I missed, but no one says anything else.

“Who’s ready for a swim?” Tom is closest to the doors, and when Theron makes an approving whoop, Tom reaches for the handle, sliding the doors across the entire expanse of the

back of the house, bringing the warmth of the air outside streaming in.

Tom, Jonas, Jimmy, Theron, and Gabe waste no time stripping off their t-shirts as I step into the sunshine, squinting my eyes against the glare and absorbing the warmth of the sun on my skin. They're all big men. Young, strong, and handsome. I've never seen so many gorgeous specimens in one place, certainly never this close. It's disarming in a way that surprises me. I didn't think I'd feel heat spread through me just from looking at their half-naked bodies. I thought I had more control than that.

They jump into the pool like excited ten-year-olds, creating a curtain of splashing water that only just misses me.

They duck under the water, rising with glistening hair and rivulets of water cascading over their tan skin and running between their gorgeous pecs. Oh, lord. For a moment, my mind goes completely blank.

"Are you enjoying the view?" Oliver says from beside me, startling me. The man moves with the grace and stealth of a cat.

"What?"

"The ocean."

I cast a sideways glance at him and catch the slight curve of his lips. That wasn't what he meant at all.

"It's my favorite thing to look at." I arch a brow, making it clear I'm not getting drawn into the innuendo. "The waves are spectacular."

"Spectacular huh?"

“You don’t enjoy looking at the ocean?” I ask.

Oliver slides his hands into the pockets of his slacks and folds his lips between his teeth. “I’m more of a mountain man myself.”

“Don’t mind Oliver.” Stefan punches his friend on the shoulder. “He has a dry sense of humor that not everyone gets.”

Oliver snorts, rubbing his smooth chin. “Thanks for explaining that to Allie, but I think she gets me just fine.”

“No problem.” Stefan widens his stance and rubs the back of his neck. “I’m going to go find a room upstairs and get changed.”

“I’m at the end of the hallway,” I say. “You can take any of the others.”

“Great, thanks.” He touches my arm gently as he passes and slaps Oliver hard on the back, and I realize why the recruiter gravitated toward men who know each other for this article. There’s already a camaraderie in the group that wouldn’t normally be present if they were all strangers. I search out Russell and Tom, the only pair who don’t have a buddy. Tom is smiling and laughing with Jonas, but Russell has kept to himself and is observing the group as though he’s the one responsible for sizing them all up for risk. He’s taken a seat on one of the comfortable-looking rattan sofas with thick cream cushions that are dotted around the pool. But even though he’s leaning back and has his legs spread wide, there is something closed about his body language.

The other men in this group all seem open and that's great because they're going to be talking about very personal things in front of each other and me. But I'm already getting the feeling that Russell is going to find the whole project mortifying. It could take some serious journalistic skills to pry information from him.

"He'll be a tough nut to crack." Oliver's read my mind.

"He knows what he's here for," I say quickly. "I'm sure it'll be fine."

"Anyone ever tell you that you're a bundle of positivity?"

Before I get a chance to answer, hands clamp around my ankles, and I'm tugged off the edge of the pool and under the water, still fully dressed. The shock of the cool water takes my breath away, and I flap my arms frantically, not sure which way is up and which way is down. Strong hands grab my waist, lifting me, and as my face breaks the surface, I let out a loud and frantic gasp.

Jonas's grin is the first thing I see when I swipe my eyes clear of the stinging pool water and melting mascara. "What the hell?" I shout, pushing at his arms, wanting to get out of his grip as soon as I can.

"You were looking hot and bothered up there. I thought it was time for you to let your hair down."

"Jonas, man! You shouldn't have done that," Theron says, and Gabe immediately agrees.

"You practically drowned me and ruined a very expensive blouse."

"I'm sure it will dry just fine."

“Oh, you’re an expert on fabrics and laundry now, are you?” I’m justified in being angry, but I cringe at the sound of my whiney, petulant voice. Jonas is unphased.

“I’m an expert at a lot of things,” he says. “And you’ve got to admit, on a hot day like this, being in the pool is better than being out.”

He’s right about the water being refreshing, and his unrestrained glee about me sharing in the pool fun has my icy response thawing just a little.

“Jonas, you can’t just go dragging me into the pool whenever you feel like it. What would have happened if I had my phone in my pocket, or a family heirloom watch, which isn’t waterproof on my wrist?”

“It would have been a very expensive prank,” Jonas says. “Lucky you left your phone on the counter, and your wrists are bare.”

This infuriating man has excellent powers of observation and smells too good, too. He holds my gaze with eyes so uniquely silver, I’m filled with the sensation of slipping into liquid metal. Heat slides from my belly to between my legs, the cool water not enough to quench the inferno of arousal that I feel at being up close and personal with such a sexy man. Flustered, I drop my gaze, finding my focus on Jonas’s rounded shoulders and pecs, my mouth falling open involuntarily at the manly perfection of his body. His fingers flex tighter at my waist and then suddenly, he’s lifting me until my butt is resting on the side of the pool. “I tell you what, Allie. You go get your bathing suit on, and if you like, you can

start asking me all your cock questions. I'm more than happy to go first."

Jimmy splashes his friend, but Jonas isn't bothered by an avalanche of pool water. He simply shakes the droplets from his straight, blond hair like a dog emerging from a swim in a lake, and places his hands either side of my thighs, gripping the edge of the pool. "I think I'm going to enjoy answering your questions, Allie."

"Jonas, man! Leave her alone," Jimmy says.

I twist my head and find Oliver watching everything with an inscrutable look on his face. He holds out his hand to me and I take it, bringing my feet up and out of the pool and pushing into a standing position. My clothes cling to my body uncomfortably. Without saying a word, he leads me to an area at the side of the pool where there is a set of cupboards. Opening a door, he pulls out a fresh towel, secured in a spa-like roll, and shakes it out, gently wrapping it around my shoulders. "Why don't you come upstairs and take off those wet clothes?" he says softly, nodding his head in gentle encouragement.

"Okay." As I breathe in the scent of his expensive cologne, something about his energy makes me want to comply.

Nodding again, he raises his chin and glances at the pool area, then he takes my hand and leads me back into the house.

"Be careful you don't slip," Oliver says, "And don't worry about Jonas." He releases my hand so he can grab his suitcase.



“Oh, I’m not.” But inside, I’m already riled up at the feeling that these men think this assignment is just one big joke.

*You think it’s stupid, too,* I remind myself. But that doesn’t make the embarrassment go away that they’re thinking the same.

## OLIVER

I watch Allie enter her room at the end of the hallway, her shoulders slightly curled in defeat, and I want to punch Jonas's lights out. What the hell was he thinking? The poor girl seems overwhelmed, and the last thing she needs is to be wrenched by her ankles into the pool fully clothed.

I open the door next to her room and find it unoccupied. Carefully resting my suitcase on the ledge next to the wardrobe, I unzip it and pull out my swim shorts.

The room I've chosen has a beautiful ocean view and is well equipped with a desk so that I can work a little while I'm here. My office doesn't know what I'm doing this week, and I don't intend on telling them. Sometimes, a man needs a break from his routine, and I've been feeling a little dry lately. When I heard about the article that Allie's magazine was planning to write, I jumped at the opportunity to spend some time away from normality. And it's going to help me make some big decisions, too.

I slowly unbutton my shirt, shaking my head. Allie seems like a great girl who doesn't really fit with the role she has. I read a couple of her previous articles last night and her writing is fluid and amusing. I can't imagine that writing about dicks and sex all the time is what she wants to do with her life, but maybe I'll be proven wrong. Not that there's anything wrong with those kinds of articles. Sex ed has an important function. It's just that Allie doesn't seem excited about what

we're here to do. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it's just about nerves and feeling overwhelmed at the number of men she has to interview.

But I have a feeling I'm not. Now I'm in my forties, I like to think I have picked up some instincts about people. The industry I've practically grown up in thrives on analyzing people and finding ways to make them want to buy things or believe in the messages we're pushing.

It's all about understanding human behavior and exploiting that understanding.

If I had to guess something about Allie, she'd rather be anywhere else than here, writing about anything else but dicks.

The thought she might not relish the task she's been given makes me press my lips together. Sex talk, like sex, shouldn't be something entered into unwillingly.

When I'm ready to head poolside, I listen out for the sound of Allie's door opening, wanting to check she's okay. As soon as I hear the click of the turning handle, I slowly ease my door open, not wanting to startle her.

Allie has twisted her hair into a sleek style, secured by a large clip, and is wearing a yellow two piece covered by a crochet beach cover up in a bright pink. Her sandals are lime green and her toenails are orange. The colors are garish and clash with each other but somehow, she looks like a designer put her outfit together for a runway show.

"Hey," I say. "Feeling better?"

"I am but my poor clothes are dripping in the bathtub."

“Don’t worry. I’ll find a way to make Jonas pay.” I add a sinister gravelly edge to my voice to make the threat humorous. “I think there’s going to be some behavior that you might need to forgive.” We begin to make our way down the stairs, and I don’t miss the way Allie’s eyes trail over my chest. Instead of gloating, I try not to show how happy I am.

“Put ten men together and there’s going to be something,” she says softly.

“If you need anything, I want you to know you can come to me. Or Stefan.”

She nods, cocking her head to one side, her warm brown eyes appraising. The noise of splashing and the thud, thud, thud of music coming from the pool area gets louder. “You guys taking on the daddy role?” she asks.

I don’t think she intends to sound sexual in any way but damn, hearing the word daddy slip from her lips so easily makes my cock thicken just a little.

“I don’t think I’m old enough to be anyone’s daddy in this group. But if maturity runs with age, then me and Stefan have a few years on the others for sure.” I want to tell her she can call me daddy anytime she likes, but I’m going to be the one man in this house who’s not going to step over the line, no matter where the conversation goes.

“That’s good to know. Thanks,” she says.

“There she is,” Carson yells as soon as Allie comes into view. “Sorry you got dunked. We’ve dunked Jonas a few times in retribution since you went upstairs.”

Jonas nods to confirm but he doesn't look unhappy with his punishment.

The pool glints like a bright jewel in the sunshine, and it seems Allie and I are the only ones not currently enjoying the cool reprieve of the water. "You coming in?" she asks, glancing down at my swimwear.

In answer, I shuck off my slides and dive gracefully into the pool. I'm quick enough to rise to the surface to watch Allie peel her crochet dress from her curvy frame and drop it onto a sunbed.

Damn, the girl looks sweet and good enough to eat. Her bikini is my favorite kind, tied with thin strings on either side of her hips and around the back of her neck. Around her ankle, a chain with a small blue charm rests against her skin, and a ring glints on one of her toes, and my cock thickens once again.

There's something very innocent about Allie. I remember girls like her when I was just out of college and touring Europe. Girls who liked to wear jewelry on their feet and drink cocktails as colorful as their nail polish. I miss the days when I was a man wild enough and young enough to show a girl like that a good time.

Allie doesn't dive in the pool. Instead, avoiding the eyes of every gawking man, she slowly lowers herself until she's sitting on the edge with her legs in the water. She sucks her stomach in a little and straightens her posture, but she doesn't need to do any of that. Most men love a woman's body to have a softness that contrasts with his own. There's

nothing better than easing between the ample warm thighs of a woman and feeling her curves against your skin.

“So, Allie. You’re really going to be asking us questions about our cocks all week?” Jimmy asks.

Allie’s cheeks flush a shade of pink that matches the dress she discarded. “I am, Jimmy.”

“That’s cool. I’ve never had any problems talking about my cock.”

“I can confirm that,” Jonas says. “Hell, sometimes I can’t get him to shut up about it.”

Jimmy shrugs his broad shoulders. “What can I say? He brings me a lot of pleasure.”

“So does your left hand,” Jonas quips. “But you don’t seem to give it the same kind of vocal attention.”

“Jesus.” Theron shakes his head. He’s leaning against the pool edge with his arms spread wide. A tattoo of a snake curls around his entire right arm. “I’m not sure how comfortable I am listening to guys talking about their cocks for seven days. Can you interview us one at a time?”

“Yeah.” Gabe nods in agreement with his cousin’s suggestion. “That could be better.”

“This isn’t my first rodeo,” Allie says, unaware of the innuendo in her statement. “I’ll conduct some interviews one on one. If there’s anything really sensitive you want to share, I’m happy to handle it discreetly. But there’s value in everyone being present, as group conversation can help to bring out topics in a more expansive way.”

“Have you written something like this before?” Tom asks.

Allie nods. “I work for a women’s magazine. I write on issues that interest and affect women.”

“And big cocks are a hot topic? Clay asks, sounding surprised.

“I think size is a topic that fascinates everyone.” She kicks her legs a little in the water, gripping the edge of the pool with her dainty hands. “For example, did you know that the Ancient Greeks associated big penises with being uncivilized or barbarian? That’s why the statues of heroes and gods all have small genitalia.”

“I knew that.” Carson runs his hand down his arm and across his chest. “I purposefully covered all the genitalia in my representations of mythology with twisting vines or adjusted poses.”

“Good thinking,” Stefan says, studying the man next to him. Neither me nor Stefan have tattoos, but I’m wondering now if my friend might change his mind after this week.

“Cool tats,” Theron says, eyeing Carson’s extreme ink.

“So, do you have a list of questions?” I ask Allie, hoping to assist her in keeping on topic.

“I do.” She glances my way and nods, but I can’t decipher if she’s grateful for my support. “And I’ll be adding to them as the week goes by. This assignment is unusual in the way it’s been set up, but the extended time that we’re all here will hopefully mean I can review the topic thoroughly.”

I glance at Russell, conscious that he’s not said much. Even though he’s now in the pool, he’s keeping a distance from the

other members of the group. As the boss of a large team, I'm used to working to draw out the best in other people. I wonder how Allie's going to encourage Russell to open up about his sexual experiences.

"Is anyone else getting hungry?" Clay asks. "What's the score with food around here?"

Allie shrugs. "They've sent us the raw ingredients, so I guess they're expecting us to prepare food for ourselves."

"Anyone here a chef?" Jonas looks around the group and when no one raises their hands, he shakes his head. "That seems like a rookie error on the part of the recruiter!"

"I'm sure everyone here has some experience in feeding themselves." I'm not about to play chef all week, but I can hold my own.

"No wives or girlfriends to look after you guys." Allie says. It's not a question so I guess our relationship status must have been on our recruitment summaries.

"A real man can look after himself," Russell says, and all the attention of the group is drawn to the strong, silent-type dude who made such a determined statement.

"Maybe Russell should cook the first meal?" Jimmy offers in a jovial tone.

"I'd be happy to do that." Russell gives a nod, his expression unreadable behind his glasses and baseball cap.

"Thank you, Russell." Allie touches her hair, tucking a stray strand behind her ear. "That's great of you to volunteer."



“One point to Russell,” Carson says, his fingers shaped into a gun, which he angles at Russell and pretends to fire.

“Are you seriously keeping some kind of score?” Clay asks his buddy.

“Yep.”

Allie shakes her head but doesn't ask Carson to elaborate. Either she doesn't care or she doesn't want to get drawn into whatever game he's playing.

Russell lifts himself out of the pool with zero effort, and dries himself enough to go back into the house and search the cupboards. His back is covered with a black inked bulldog who's eyes seem to bore into mine. I decide to offer my assistance and follow. By the time I make it inside, Russell's already on his way to gathering ingredients. “What are you thinking?” I ask.

“Barbecue,” he says. “There's a grill out there.”

I wondered if he'd noticed. “I think that's a great idea for day one.” I open a drawer and retrieve some barbecue equipment. “There's something about cooking outside that gets everybody mingling.”

“I just enjoy grilled meat,” he adds dryly.

“Can I help at all?”

Russell has removed his glasses and his green eyes narrow just a little at my suggestion. “I don't know,” he says, picking up a cucumber and waving it like a weapon. “Will Carson deduct my point if you do?”

We both laugh dryly. “Probably, but I wouldn’t worry about it.”

“Says the only other man with a point.” Russell raises his chin knowingly and we chuckle again.

“I’ll tell you what. You deal with the meat, and I’ll make a couple of big salads.”

“Sounds good.”

We work side by side while Russell creates some intricate marinades that smell delicious, and I dice vegetables like a pro. Not for the first time, I’m thankful for the lessons my mom gave me before she passed away.

After a while, Allie joins us to find out what’s cooking and her eyes linger on both of us, sizing up more than just the food.

She’s a journalist, I remind myself. An observer and commentator on the world. Yes, she’ll be asking us questions, but she’ll be watching us the whole time, building a picture of the way we interact and the kind of people we are.

She’s looking for, what do they call it, big dick energy. Confidence without cockiness. Or just maybe assessing for arrogance.

My attention is drawn to a line of water which slides down the side of her neck, across her clavicle and down between her breasts. This week is going to be interesting for many reasons, but the one at the forefront of my mind is how clear Allie will be able to see the truth in all of us, and whether any of the group will push for the chance to show her what a big dick can do.

## ALLIE

We eat outside in the shelter of a large wooden pergola. It's covered with bright bougainvillea that's a riot of color in the stark modern surroundings. Russell's platters of succulent barbecued meat really hit the spot, and Oliver created two salads that even the most committed carnivores in the group can't stop groaning about.

I find it interesting that they left me a space at the head of the table. Interesting and unexpected. From a body language point of view, the most dominant in the group is expected to sit at the head, and the fact that none of them took that spot is fascinating. Maybe it's because I'm running the focus of the week, or maybe they didn't want to step on the toes of the other men.

For the first time since Kirsty told me about this assignment, I'm finding something interesting in the process of discovery.

Just as I take my final mouthful, conscious that holding my belly tight is now going to be impossible, the doorbell rings.

"I'll get it," Tom offers, not waiting for me or anyone else to contradict him.

He's back in a minute, holding a large cardboard box.

"It's for you." Approaching, he lowers it to the floor next to me.

He kindly wipes his steak knife on a paper towel and slices the packing tape, leaving me to prise open the cardboard flaps. Inside is a receipt with a message.

**Dear Allie, here's a fun activity for you to do with the men in the group. Enjoy. Kirsty.**

A fun activity. It sounds innocuous enough. It's not until I pull the first package out from inside the box that I realize this activity is far from innocent.

"Make your own dildo," Gabe reads from beside me.

"What?" Clay asks from further down the table. The buzz of conversation from the rest of the group quietens.

"It's a 'Make your own dildo' kit," Gabe repeats.

"There are ten of them," Tom adds, after digging around in the box.

"Are you serious?" Theron sounds as though he can't believe anyone in their right mind would want to do such a thing.

"You're used to making things with your hands," Jimmy tells him. "This should be right up your alley."

"How is there any comparison between building houses and making dildos?" Theron rolls his eyes and uses his right hand to crack the knuckles on his left hand as though he's preparing himself for a fight, or maybe for the task of dildo making. Who knows!

"Hang on a minute." Clay pushes his chair back and squats next to the box. His long wavy hair has curled in the heat, and

it flops over his eyes. He picks up a kit and stands, shaking it in his hand. "I saw a TikTok about this. It's a molding kit."

"What do you mean?" Theron leans forward to get a better look.

"I mean, we're making dildos in the shape of our cocks." His mischievous smile is accompanied by an endearing flash of his dimples.

Theron and Gabe both throw their hands in the air, reminding me of the body language of the mobsters in *The Sopranos*. "There's no way I'm dipping my dick into a mold. What happens if it gets stuck?" Theron's face twists into a grimace.

"I'm sure they product tested that possibility out before they launched," Clay says.

"So you're happy to dip your dick into that thing?" Gabe's usually easy expression is twisted with uncertainty.

"I'm guessing the purpose of this exercise is that Allie will get to see our dimensions without having to ask us to drop our pants." Oliver arches a brow and rubs his chin, rustling his beard hair as he considers what he just said. "It's clever."

"If she wants to see my dick, all she has to do is ask. I'm not shy." Theron stands and my hands fly up, palms facing him.

"Down boy. The only sausage I'm happy to see at this table is the barbecued kind."

A ripple of laughter spreads through the group and I begin to scan the back of one of the boxes, trying to gauge what's expected of everyone. "It sounds easy," I confirm. "Is there a brave soul in this group who's prepared to go first?"

“I’ll do it,” Carson says. “I need a point to keep me in the running!”

“The running for what?” I ask, unable to suppress my curiosity any further.

He taps the side of his nose. “That would be telling.” He stands and takes the box from Clay. “I’ll be back.” Disappearing into the house, he takes the stairs two at a time in his haste. At least someone’s interested in completing the task. I’m more than interested to review the results. Kirsty might be annoying, but this is a clever idea.

“I think he wants to be the first to get Allie’s hands on his dick.” Jonas waves his fork in the air. He’s still eating, and I marvel at where he puts all the food in his bionically toned athletic frame. Hollow legs!

“His rubber dick,” I correct.

“Potatoes-potatoes.”

“And what’s going to happen with these dildos after?” Russell’s brows form a serious line.

“You worried someone’s going to use yours to get off?” Jimmy mimics the movement of a dildo being wielded, and Oliver puts up a hand to diffuse the situation.

“There’s only one woman in this house,” Oliver says, “and I’m sure she’s perfectly happy with her sex life without the need of our homemade dildos.”

He couldn’t be more wrong. My sex life has been as dry as the Gobi Desert for far too long. I’m pretty sure things are closing up down there through lack of use. Hell, the idea of Carson’s cock in rubber form is way more appealing than it

should be, and I feel like such a total loser for thinking that way.

“Who here is comfortable producing a rubber replica of their dick?” I ask to steer the conversation away from me.

There’s a moment of hesitation when the men look around at the others in the group to judge expressions, then hands start to rise. Everyone except Gabe and Theron have their hands in the air.

“Look.” Theron gesticulates like he’s chopping the air in fury. “It’s not that I’m uncomfortable about a replica of my dick existing. It’s the process of making the replica that I’m not stoked about.”

“Me either,” Gabe says.

“But if Carson comes down and says it’s no big deal, then I’ll do it,” Theron adds and like magic, Gabe nods his agreement too.

“Okay then. I guess the rest of the afternoon is going to be about rubber dicks.” Could my life get any stranger?

“You know these things come with vibrating inserts.” Tom waves the box in his hand.

“What?” My eyebrows practically hit my hairline.

“So, they’re less a dildo and more a vibrator,” Stefan observes.

“Ten vibrating dicks on the wall,” Jonas sings.

“We can line them up and toss a ball at them, like ten-pin bowling,” Jimmy adds.

The image of a bowling alley filled with giant purple vibrators makes me snort. Jeez.

I pick up my plate, and reach for more on the table but Stefan stands and takes over. “Leave this to us,” he says. “Russell and Oliver get a pass for cooking, and you get a pass for being pretty.”

Oh, he’s smooth as well as handsome. That’s a devastating combination. The flush of hot blood that colors my neck and cheeks can’t be concealed, and I press my hands against my face, embarrassed.

“Look at that,” Tom says, gently. “Allie can’t take a compliment.”

“Do I get a pass for being pretty?” Jonas flutters his long lashes.

“You get to sweep the floor for being a dick,” Stefan says, but it isn’t with any bite and Jonas shrugs his shoulders, accepting the task easily.

While the men clear the table and deal with the mess inside, I take the opportunity to take a stroll down to the beach, eager to check out the rest of our surroundings. There’s a gate at the back of the property and then a few steps, and I climb down until my feet hit the cool sand and the ocean stretches uninterrupted in front of me.

The air is moist and salty in my lungs, and I breathe deeply. As I approach the water, my phone, clutched in my right hand, begins to vibrate, and I lift it to check the caller ID.

It’s Dawn, my bestie who’s currently residing in Australia. Well, Byron Bay, to be exact. From the photos she’s sent me,



the beach there is similar to where I'm standing.

I accept the video call and hold up the phone, so the first thing she sees is the ocean.

"What?" I hear her scream. "I didn't know you were going on vacation!"

"I'm not. I'm working. But look where my assignment is!"

"It's amazing," she says. "So beautiful." I turn the phone so I can see her face and she can see mine and we beam at each other. "So, the dick size assignment is actually happening. I thought you were joking."

"No jokes," I laugh. "Well, actually, there is an abundance of joking. The men they've recruited for this study are very funny!"

"So you've met them all?"

"Yep. I've been dragged into the pool fully clothed and now they're cleaning up inside while I take a walk on the beach."

"Sounds like my life." She grins broadly, her straight white teeth a contrast to her tan skin.

"You'll never guess what my crazy boss has tasked those poor men to do!" I laugh.

"Stand naked in front of you so you can double check the size they claim to be with a school ruler?"

"Errr...gross. But kind of."

"Just spill it," Dawn says. "I can't stand the suspense."

"They're all in there right now, making rubber dildos using a mold kit. In about an hour, they're going to present me with

ten vibrating replicas of their cocks.”

“WHAAAAT? Have I ever told you that you have the best job on the planet?”

I roll my eyes and trail my foot in the water, shivering at the sudden coolness. “No, you haven’t and no, I don’t. It’s just frigging weird, and it gets weirder and weirder as the years go on.”

“Are you telling me you’re not intrigued?”

I shrug my shoulders, walking deeper so the cool seawater laps over my ankles. “I’m intrigued, I guess. I haven’t ever had the pleasure of seeing something like that in real life.”

“Are you serious?”

“Well, yeah. I mean, the ones I’ve gotten up close and personal with have been more average size.”

“I’m sorry, Allie, but if you call me at the end of this week and tell me you haven’t made the most of experiencing what one of those men has to offer, I’m personally flying over to intervene.”

“Have you...I mean...ten inches.”

“Errr...yeah. This might be TMI but I’ve handled many of those at the same time.”

I screw up my nose and twist my lips, trying to push out the images that Dawn has created in my mind. “How? Actually, I don’t want to know the details of how that’s even achievable. What I should be telling you is that you’re a better woman than me and that your new nickname is Queen of Dicks.”

“Queen of Cocks has a better ring to it,” she muses. “And I am unashamed by my extensive experience. We’re only young once, Allie. Don’t waste your good years imitating Mother Theresa. Have some fun before your ovaries start ticking or your beard hair outnumbers the hairs on your head.”

“Gross imagery. And my ovaries are silent,” I gasp. “Hell. I’m struggling to look after myself right now. Forget putting myself into a situation where I need to look after anyone else.”

“I know what you mean, babe,” Dawn muses and her face loses its usual brightness.

“Anyway, I have to keep things professional,” I say. “I’m a journalist on assignment, not a frat princess on spring break.”

“Oh, to go back to those good old days. All I’m saying, sweetie, is that you don’t have to let life pass you by. It’s okay to be frivolous and impetuous some of the time. Sow some wild oats.”

“I thought that’s something people say to men! I don’t have any oats.”

“Well, let someone give you a good plowing once in a while,” Dawn laughs. “At least one of those men up there has to be a potential lover, surely?”

“They’re all so gorgeous it’s hard to look at them without overheating,” I admit.

“You have to get a group shot and send it to me.” Dawn points a finger at the phone like an angry teacher. “If you don’t...so help me.”

“I will,” I say. “I’ll need to get some good shots for the article.”

“Jeez. They’re expecting you to be the photographer as well. What kind of magazine is this? Bargain Basement?”

“They’re sending in a professional, but I wouldn’t mind some candid shots of my own. So, how are you?” I ask.

“There’s good and bad in every day,” she says. “We all just need to spend more time focusing on the good and leave the bad to deal with itself.”

“Did anyone ever tell you that you should write a self-help book?”

“I could call it ‘The YOLO Way,’” she says.

“It would be a bestseller, babe.” We grin at each other, the distance between us feeling small, but as a loud wave crashes next to me, I’m drawn back to my present situation.

“I’ll send you that picture as soon as I’m brave enough to get them to pose for me.”

“You’re brave enough,” Dawn says. “Remember when you wrote that article for your university newspaper that exposed teacher bullying and unfairness? That was crazy brave.”

A shiver raises the hair on my arms as the memory of how close I came to being kicked off my college course floods through me. “I remember,” I say. “But to be honest, I’d rather forget.”

“That was one of your golden moments.” Dawn nods her head, and in the background, I hear the rumble of men’s voices.

“What’s a golden moment?”

“One that you’ll recall on your deathbed with pride. A moment when you did the right thing, no matter how serious the consequences might have been for you.”

I inhale a deep breath to squash the rush of emotion my friend’s words have elicited, the realization that I’ve been more than the person I am today filling me with a longing that’s hard to take.

“I’m not going to look back at this stupid article with pride, Dawn.”

“Maybe not,” she says. “But maybe this is something you have to do to learn what your true path really is.”

The dreams I’ve had for where I want to go with my career flutter forward in my mind, but I stuff them back down and close the door on them again. I might want to break out of my current situation, but there are too many reasons to stay on this path and too many risks involved in breaking out.

I glance up at the house and find Russell by the gate. His blue baseball cap is pulled down low over his aviator sunglasses, so it’s impossible for me to see what he’s looking at. Maybe he has a hankering for the ocean like me, or maybe he’s standing there watching me.

That should feel creepy. He’s a stranger, after all. But despite that, Russell exudes that kind of solid quality that makes people feel safe. He’s the rock of the group, I think. The anchor.

I wave in his direction, and he nods once, stoic even in his acknowledgement.

“I’ve got to go,” I tell Dawn. “I have many rubber dicks to peruse.”

“Now there’s a sentence that has probably never been uttered by another human being,” she laughs.

“And probably never will be again.”

“You live a weird and wonderful life.” Her smile is broad, as though all the craziness I share with her enriches her life somehow.

“And that’s coming from a woman who shares a bed with nine men.”

“We’re weirdo partners in crime,” she says.

“And will my weirdo partner be okay with answering a few questions about whether size matters for my article?” Kirsty’s insistence that I must have enough friends to comment on this question is fresh in my mind.

“Of course.” Dawn shoots me a filthy grin and a wink. “Although you might never be able to look me in the eye again after.”

I laugh and we say our goodbyes as Russell begins to make his way across the sand towards me.

## RUSSELL

The beach behind this house is a slash of pale-yellow sand against a frothing turquoise ocean that fills the air with white noise. Allie stands in her bright two-piece, her hair blowing like glossy ribbons around her pretty face, laughing at the person on the other end of the phone, and my stomach tightens at the thought that it might be a boyfriend. Then a woman's voice cuts through the space between us, and I breathe a surprisingly long sigh of relief.

*Get a grip*, I mutter to myself. She's a journalist who is only here for a story. She's not interested in getting to know me.

I've noticed more than a few hungry glances cast in her direction but she's a professional and we all need to remember that.

Being the only woman in a huge group of isolated men is going to have its challenges. Goodness knows what we're all going to be feeling after seven days of talking about sex, and no actual action.

Not that I've had any action for a while.

I know that women are supposed to love men in uniform, but after years of experiencing some of the most difficult situations, it's hard for me to let down my defenses and accept the softer and more frivolous parts of life.

Allie seems like a combination of both. She's pretty and funny, with a lightheartedness and humor that's already

settled into some of my cracks.

As the wind whips again, I ball my fists at my sides and release them, pushing the coiled tension out through my fingertips. When Allie turns to me and lowers her phone, I become immediately conscious that she might find my presence uncomfortable.

“Russell,” she says softly, her focus on my face before it drifts down my body. Instinctively, I stand straighter. “Everything alright?”

I nod, even though it’s not. I was stupid to volunteer for this interview. I was stupid to listen to my brother who thought it would be good for me to get away from everything that reminds me of the past, and meet some new people who might make the present and future less gray and paralyzing.

“I don’t think I’m right for this,” I say before I have a chance to evaluate how my words might sound or be received.

“You don’t want to take part in the interviews?” The disappointment on her face makes me feel like a fucking coward.

“I just think...I’m not like those guys up there.” I slide my hands into my pockets, grateful for my sunglasses and the shield they offer for my eyes.

“And you don’t need to be.” Allie shifts her feet on the sand, hitching her right hip higher and my eyes fixate on the narrowing of her waist and the flare of her curves.

“These questions you’re going to ask...” I trail off, not sure how to articulate my reservations.



“We can start now,” she says softly. “I can start your interview here for a few minutes and you can see how you feel about it. I don’t want to lose you and I’ll do anything to make you feel comfortable about staying for the full seven days.”

I glance down the beach, spotting a family digging sandcastles a little way further along. It’s so quiet here. Isolated in a way I didn’t expect.

The waves crash loudly behind Allie as the thunder of my own blood races in my ears. I feel hot from the inside out, a furnace whose heat can’t be reduced by the wind and sea spray. Twelve weeks in a freezer couldn’t rid me of the heat of my constant bubbling uncertainty about living a life outside the military.

“We don’t even need to sit face to face when I ask questions. Why don’t we sit back to back?” Allie’s expression is so open and accommodating, but she has no idea how fucking uncomfortable it would make me to sit that way. Why the hell can’t I be like Jonas who doesn’t seem to have a shred of wariness about him, or Oliver, whose bone deep confidence oozes from every pore?

I’m about to tell her it’s better if I just leave now when she reaches out to touch my arm. The gentle press of her fingers hurts as much as it heals.

“I get that talking about this kind of thing is weird. When they gave me this assignment, I really didn’t know how I was going to handle it. But we’re both adults and I’m sure that leaving before this thing is done won’t sit well with you. From the little time we’ve spent together, I can tell you’re a man

who likes to get things done and who takes his commitments seriously. So why don't we both look at this situation as a series of tasks that we both need to get done?"

My eyes drift from her earnest face to the sand between us. Even Allie's feet are pretty and momentarily steal my concentration. When she turns to face away from me and drops to sit on the sand crossed legged, I feel like I've missed my chance to object.

Lowering myself to rest on the sand with Allie at my back doesn't feel good. I like to be able to assess a situation and now I won't be able to observe her mannerisms and reactions to what I'm saying. So I turn so I'm facing her back instead. At least this way, she can't see me but I can see her.

"Do you mind if I record your answers so I can take notes from them later, or I can type on my phone, but it'll be slower?"

"Recording's fine," I say gruffly.

"Okay." Allie inhales a deep breath and blows it out softly, her nerves palpable in the air around us. She fiddles with her phone and then rests it on her toned thigh. "When did you realize you were above average in size?" she says. There's a new huskiness to her voice that takes my mind off the black knot inside me and builds an awareness of Allie that makes my cock thicken. I lick my lips and flare my nostrils as my mind screams that this is fucking stupid and ridiculous, that I should stand and walk away. But the part of me that knows walking away will disappoint Allie wins over. I don't want to make her feel bad about her job. I don't want to hurt her feelings in any way.

“I guess just after puberty. Comments in the locker rooms.” I pick up sand, letting it trail between my fingers as the waves form enough background noise to quieten my internal monologue a little. “My first sexual experience didn’t go so well.”

“How so?” Allie asks.

“We were sixteen, and she was a virgin. We didn’t fit.”

“Fit?”

“Yeah. She...she couldn’t take what I had to give. Width is as much of an issue as length. Sometimes more.”

“Oh...I see what you mean.” Allie sits a little straighter, the tiny bones of her spine pressing against her smooth skin. I could press kisses on each bump, and make her shiver. “So what happened?”

“She broke up with me and then the rumors started.”

“Rumors about your size?”

“Yeah.”

“Positive or negative?”

“That’s just it.” I shrug even though she can’t see the mannerism. “When people ask the question ‘does size matter?’, most people would say yes. Most guys would want a ten-inch cock. Women seem to have a fascination with size, but in my experience, it doesn’t match reality.”

“So girls were negative about it?”

“Girls were intrigued and then scared.”

“Really?”

“Really,” I tell her. “I never knew if girls really liked me or if they just wanted a chance to see what was in my pants. When I joined the military, I thought I’d get away from it, but there’s no privacy when you’re on active service, and they gave me the nickname Snake.”

“And how did that make you feel?”

I’m not a man who jokes easily. The nickname felt like a slap, but I got used to it over time. “There are a lot of people in this world living through hell. Walking around with a nickname I’d rather not have seems like a tiny drop in an ocean of problems.”

“How did it make *you* feel, though?” Allie emphasizes the *you* and I dig my fingers into the sand, clawing for the coolness beneath the top layer. Her hair moves in the wind, little tendrils shifting, and I focus on the glossiness of the strands and not on how uncomfortable I feel that she might be judging everything I say.

“It made me feel exposed. I couldn’t hide from what people knew about me...something that should be private...and I had to just accept the mixed feelings that come with it. Guys being envious and women’s fascination, which is kind of fetishistic.”

“This is interesting,” Allie says. “I wonder if it’s the same as women with big breasts.”

“Women can’t hide their breasts,” I say. “They’re just there. Whether they cover them, or show them in revealing tops, men will be aware of their size and imagine them unclothed. Men with big dicks can hide them for the most part, although wearing any kind of sweatpants can reveal more than is socially acceptable.”

“So, does that make it better or worse than women in those circumstances?”

“I couldn’t speak for someone else’s experiences.”

She makes an agreeing sound and I shift to get a little closer so I can hear her more clearly.

“And now that you’ve left the military?”

“People don’t get to leave the military. I mean, we leave, but it’s still there, all the time, every day.”

“Are you still friends with the people you were stationed with?”

“Some, and they still call me Snake. It sucks because new people think I’m shady until someone explains the reason for the name.”

“So you have to go back through people finding out your personal details each time you meet someone new.”

I nod and toss the grains in my hand, watching them disappear against the undulating sand before me. “Exactly.”

“And sex. Is it good now you’ve gotten past the virgin first girlfriend?”

The abruptness of the question knocks me off kilter. “It can be. Depends on the person.”

“Physically?”

“Sometimes, but it’s more of a communication thing, I think. The more open someone is to talking about sex, the better chance there is of it being satisfying for both parties, and in my case, the more chance of it being possible!”

I try to make light of it, but Allie pauses and even with her back to me, I feel her close observation of my answer. “Talking in advance or during?” she asks.

“Both,” I say. “I don’t want to hurt anyone I’m with, although sometimes there isn’t much I can do about it. It depends on how well we fit.”

“Mmm....that’s interesting.” Allie turns in my direction, blinking when she finds me looking directly at her. The wind whips the tendrils of her hair again and my fingers itch to smooth it. “Sorry...I just feel like I’m missing out on so much by not seeing you. Would it be okay for me to stay like this?”

I nod and shift until I’m sitting crossed legged, feeling like a kid on the kindergarten rug. “I guess so.”

“So, what you’re saying is that size matters for both partners?”

I shrug, her analysis of my answer throwing up a whole other avenue of discussion. “Yeah. Sure. I mean, when I see really tall men with really short women, my first thought is always, ‘how do they make that work?’. Or when you see tall women with short men, the same thing. When it comes to the size of other things, it helps if people are compatible.”

“So, you mean that it fits more easily?” Allie is focused on the recording app on her phone, her cheeks taking on a pretty, soft blush. Somehow, seeing that she’s struggling a little to ask me this stuff makes me less awkward.

“Yeah. Compatibility of size means less work, but there are ways of making things fit if size compatibility isn’t quite there.”

“Right,” Allie says, nodding emphatically. Her eyes flick up to mine, and I’m grateful for the thin dark plastic that conceals my gaze from hers. She bites the side of her lip as though she’s trying to determine if she should ask the question that’s on the tip of her tongue. “If you could change your size, would you?”

I’ve thought about this question many times before. When people have big noses, they can go for surgery to make them more moderate in size. Women have breast reductions and enlargements, lifts and tucks and goodness knows what else. But a man’s penis is pretty much a fixed entity, a size we’re allocated by a genetic roulette. “I wouldn’t change anything about myself,” I say. “We’re handed our lot and the good and the bad shapes us. I wouldn’t be the me I am right now if I was built differently because I would have had a whole heap of different experiences across my life.”

She nods and presses the stop button on her app before she looks up at me.

“That’s great for now.” Her smile is genuine, but maybe a little artificially bright. Allie puts across a confident persona, but there’s something beneath that feels uncertain. She stands and brushes the sand from her butt and thighs, glancing up at the clear blue sky spread above us. I rise to my feet too, stretching my arms above my head and letting the blood ease back into my cramped legs. “Are they all using the mold kits?” she asks, her attention already focused back on the house.

“I think so. Maybe Gabe and Theron are still waiting to make sure no one else’s dick falls off in the process.”

She laughs, shaking her head. “That’s a revelation in itself, how some men are happy to stick their dicks into kits and others aren’t so eager.”

“Like a lot of dudes are happy to stick their dicks into random women and others are more discerning.”

“Or maybe how men are happier to stick their dicks into random women than they are into quality tested vibrator making kits.” She starts walking toward the stairs that rise from the beach and turns to make sure I’m following. “I’m curious to see what the results will be like.”

She starts to climb the stairs and I wait for her to reach the top, not wanting her to feel crowded. Her bikini briefs sink a little deeper into the cheeks of her gorgeous ass, and I have to think about cleaning my gun, and the never-ending desert I spent years staring into, to prevent my dick from hardening.

I used to love the beach, but sand has taken on a different quality.

I had my own reservations about using one of those kits, but now I’m kind of intrigued. Allie’s response to the activity is going to be the most interesting thing about it for me.

And not for the first time since I met her. I wonder just how compatible we might be.



## ALLIE

I was unaware of how long I was at the beach with Russell until I notice seven purple rubber cocks lined up on the outside table, standing tall and proud, like a battalion ready for war.

Russell, who's close behind me, laughs wryly.

"Seven times lucky," he says.

I'm mesmerized by the size of them, and fascinated by the different girths, curves, veins, head sizes...hell, all the differences. I open my mouth a few times to make a comment but can't think of anything to say without setting my face on fire again, so I turn back to Russell. "Are you going to do yours now?" I scan his body language for his true response. Russell is a very reserved man, and he holds a lot behind a veneer so stoic it's hard to see him breathe let alone react.

"Do you want me to?"

"I think you should. And if Theron and Gabe aren't doing theirs, can you encourage them?"

"Sure." Russell saunters away, grabbing a kit from the counter in the kitchen. I note that it's the only one there, so I guess that Theron and Gabe must have overcome their reticence.

"Hey, Allie." Jimmy emerges from the kitchen with a tray of beers and other assorted drinks. He's followed by a troupe of

other men who seem ready for more pool time. “Did you see our beautiful creations?”

“How could I miss them?” My eyes drift over the purple monsters again and I get a flash image of those famous statues on an island somewhere, facing out to sea like giant totems.

“There was a sharpie in the box so we’ve marked them so we know whose is whose,” Stefan adds.

“How thoughtful,” I say. “But wouldn’t you recognize your own?”

“I don’t know.” He grimaces. “I mean, maybe. But we only really get to see the top of it, don’t we?”

“That’s a good point that I hadn’t even considered.”

“Our ex-girlfriends would have more luck making that kind of identification.”

“Unless they’ve wiped the sight of your junk from their memories,” I say with an arched brow.

“My junk is unforgettable.” Jonas runs a hand through his sun-lightened hair, his liquid steel eyes boring into mine. When he folds in his lips to moisten them and shoots me a grin and a wink, I’m momentarily dazed by his presence.

“Hey,” Jimmy barks at his friend. “Less of the flirty stuff with Allie. We’re not here for that. We’re here so she can find out all our deepest, darkest secrets and publish them for the world to hear.”

“Exactly.” I blink myself back into the moment as Jonas’s eyes trail over my body. I swear it’s like his gaze has fingers

that explore every inch of my skin.

“I’m sure Allie can take a little flirting. She must be used to it.”

I’m not, but I’m not about to tell Jonas that.

“So, Allie, you want to ask us some questions?” Stefan moves closer, his gait smooth and considered as a panther. The soft dusting of dark hair across his chest has me feeling all kinds of ways and none of them are professional.

“Truth or dare?” Jonas suggests.

“Now, how would that work?” Jimmy rolls his eyes and bounces on his toes. “Seriously, dude. We’re supposed to be opening up, not taking dares so we don’t have to answer Allie’s questions. That game would fuck up the interview process.”

“No...it’s okay. It could work,” I say, my mind already flashing through the potential. Finding out what they’re not prepared to share would be as interesting as hearing what they are willing to be open about.

“I don’t know about you guys, but I’m hotter than Satan’s balls.” Carson jogs past and swiftly jumps into the pool, sending a wave of spray over the side. Clay follows him, and then Tom. Jimmy, Jonas, Oliver and Stefan wait to hear what I need from them, which is sweet.

“We can play in the pool,” I suggest. “Might as well keep cool and make the most of the facilities.”

In a flash, the rest dive into the pool and I’m left alone on the side, stifling a smile. Forget feeling like a kindergarten teacher. I’m more like a dog sitter with ten eager puppies.

“We’re done,” a deep voice says from behind me. Theron and Gabe each grip their purple dick replicas in their hands, holding them out to me eagerly. My hands hang by my sides as limp as dish rags because reaching out to take their offerings is a step I don’t know how to take.

“Leave them on the table,” Oliver yells. Maybe he notices my uncertainty or maybe he’s just a born organizer. Either way, I’m grateful.

“And mark them with the first two letters of your name,” Stefan calls. “On the base.”

Both men drift to the table as instructed, and I use the distraction to take a seat on the edge of the pool. Carson’s having none of it, though, and he tugs my legs with his big strong hands until I’m neck deep in the water and pressed against his rock-hard body. “That’s better, isn’t it?” He holds me above water with his hands spanning my waist. Hands that feel huge, strong, and very capable.

“I don’t know, Carson. Is it?” I snap and he laughs, the movement of his body flexing his hands against my flesh.

“It definitely is.”

I reach out for the edge of the pool, and he reluctantly lets me go. “That’s minus one point for you,” I say as I swipe the water from my face and slick back my hair.

“No, baby. Don’t say that.” His hangdog expression is too adorable for me to hold anything against him.

“Is he always like this?” I ask Clay, who nods as he swipes back his wavy blond hair, water droplets spraying out behind him.

“Always. Girls either love him or hate him. There’s nothing in between.”

“Mostly, they love,” Carson grins.

“I’m reserving judgment.”

“Awww.” Carson presses his hand over his heart. “I’m wounded.”

“You’ll heal,” I say.

Oliver swims closer, somehow still managing to look like a GQ cover model. “So, Allie. What do you want to know?”

“Truth or dare,” Carson reminds us all, and Oliver rolls his eyes.

“I’m a grown man. Playing games isn’t my thing. Whatever you want to know, Allie, I’ll tell you.”

“I can ask you what I already asked Russell?” I say. “But I need to get my phone from the table so I can record you. No more pulling me into the pool, Carson.”

He holds his hands up, palms facing out, surrendering to my demands.

When I’ve lifted myself out of the pool with as much grace as I can muster, and grabbed my phone, I get myself comfortably positioned on the side of the pool.

“Okay,” I say. “When did you realize you were above average in size?” I address the question to Oliver, who manages to keep a straight face.

“My dad mentioned that he was happy I was following in his footsteps. It was always a jokey thing that was mentioned with me and my brothers.”

“So it’s a family thing?” I get an instant icky feeling for asking about the size of his dad’s cock in a roundabout way. If Oliver is in his forties, his dad must be mid-sixties! This assignment is taking me to places I never thought I’d wander into!

“Yeah,” he says. “I guess, like anything physical, there’s a genetic element.”

“My first girlfriend refused to suck it,” Jonas says. “She said there was no way she could get her mouth wrapped around it. When I pointed out she’d sucked off my buddy the year before, she told me my dick was double the size of most guys.”

“Classy,” Clay comments.

“Yeah. She was a class act at giving head...at least that’s what my buddy told me.”

Stefan swims with an elegant breast stroke until he’s resting his arm on the pool edge next to my thigh. “I played sports right through school. It’s hard not to notice that you stand out in the locker room.”

“Yeah,” Jimmy agrees. “That’s the same as me. But then there are growers and showers so you don’t really know what size men are unless you see them erect.”

“That’s a good point,” Tom says. “Maybe that’s why men don’t seem that conscious about getting naked in front of each other despite the size differences?”

“And men don’t really discuss cock size much,” Clay says. “At least, it isn’t a conversation I’ve had with anyone other

than girls I've been having sex with, until I told a few buddies what I was doing this week."

"And how did that conversation go?"

"They were more interested in the beach house and the fact that I'm getting paid to talk about my junk than they were interested in discussing the actual subject matter." He squints up at me, his hazel eyes even lighter in the glare of the sun. "In fact, they're all in committed relationships and they have much smaller dicks than me and Carson, so I guess that's some evidence that dick size doesn't matter when it comes to long-term success in the love game."

"In my experience, women have found sex with me daunting at first. It's only once we've gotten over the first penetration that they've relaxed into it," Tom says.

"Do you have a way of reassuring?" Oliver asks. "Like, something you always say to encourage things to progress."

Tom nods. "I remind them that babies come out that way, and my dick is a lot smaller than a baby's head."

There's a ripple of laughter around all the men in the pool. "Yeah, I've said the exact same thing," Carson says.

"And me," Jimmy adds.

I look to Theron and Gabe, who both entered the pool quietly via the steps rather than jumping in like the rest of them. It's cute that they didn't want to disrupt our discussion.

"What about you, Theron? When did you realize you were on the upper end when it comes to size?"

“I’m from a Greek family,” he says, as though that explains everything.

“Greeks don’t have the same kind of sensibilities as other nationalities,” Gabe explains. “You got a big dick? That shit’s discussed proudly by your father at every family gathering.”

“Yeah...it’s Thanksgiving and the turkey neck will be compared to your cock size,” Theron holds out his hands in an exaggerated measurement. “It’s Christmas, and the Toblerone is compared to your dick.”

There’s a snigger as the group listens with amusement as Theron and Gabe begin to show their humorous sides. “We’ve got this sausage called Pastourma...you can guess where the conversion goes whenever the family is grilling that on the barbecue.”

“Do they ever talk about anything else?” Stefan jokes.

“Yeah. Mostly about how much weight everyone’s gained or lost. Or about how much money people have or don’t have. And about who’s got the bigger house and the more expensive car.”

“They sound like they’re obsessed with the size of everything,” I say, wishing I could meet Theron and Gabe’s crazy family.

“Kind of.”

I run my hand through the water, splashing some onto my thighs that are getting a little pink from the sun. “Another question,” I say. “How many women have had a problem with your size?”



“I had one relationship that broke down because of it,” Tom says. “She had a general problem with sex, though. I think my big dick was just the last straw.”

“What was the problem?” Oliver asks, with concern lining his expression.

“She’s had some bad experiences in the past. It caused a condition. I tried to help her through it, but it became too much of an issue in her mind. She used to look at my dick with real fear in her eyes.”

“That would be a boner killer.” Jimmy’s usual joking tone is reduced to something softer and more empathetic.

“Yeah,” Tom says sadly. “It was. But there’s more to relationships than sex. I just wanted to make her happy, and I was confident things would have gotten better over time. She just had too much of a hangup about it.”

“I’ve had women ban us from fucking in certain positions because my dick hits too deep,” Gabe says. As he confesses, he cups his fisted right hand in his giant left palm, crunching his knuckles.

“Yeah, doggy can be fucked up,” Jonas says.

“It’s hard to control the depth,” Carson says. “Especially when you’re getting close.”

“And losing control,” Clay adds.

“Exactly,” Jimmy agrees.

And as they talk more about sex and positions, my mind drifts to a place where I don’t have to be sensible and professional. Where my life hasn’t been driven by financial

pressure to be successful, and I can relax enough to have experiences like these men, and the women in their tales. My mind becomes filled with forbidden images of them over me and under me and behind me, filling me with cocks so big, they make my eyes water and my body convulse with pleasure.

I might still be a virgin, but I have a vivid imagination.

They fuel my filthy thoughts with their sparkling eyes and tanned skin, their big biceps, and broad chests. They fuel them with their huge hands and abs that stretch like ladders down to places made for sin. They make me think such debauched things that I feel like a hypocrite for being mad at the delivery driver. As I try to fan away a hot flush with my hand, all I can think is thank goodness I'm recording this conversation because I'm so lost in my own fantasies that I've missed out on information that could be crucial to building my article. I can only hope my blood-tinged skin doesn't give it all away.

## CARSON

I'm not sure how I'm nominated to cook on the first night we're together, but that's what's happening. My mistake for talking about all things food with Russell after the barbecue feast he prepared for us. My Thai Green curry recipe must have tickled his taste buds enough to mention it to a few others in the group.

As I prepare the ingredients, the air in the kitchen is filled with anticipation. Allie is pretending not to watch me, her attention focused on her phone, but I feel her gaze drifting over every so often. She is an intriguing mix of confident and tentative. It's like she has belief in herself up until the point she hears the whisper of doubt in her ears. In truth, she reminds me a little of myself.

Jimmy, Theron, and Gabe stand around the island, watching me with interest, or maybe it's to assess the competition. Jimmy leans closer, peering at the ingredients. "You sure you can handle the heat, Carson? There are a lot of hungry people in this place expecting something amazing to eat."

"No pressure then." I hold up a chili pepper. "I'm good with heat. What about you?"

"I kick heat in the ass," he laughs. I believe that. After Allie paused the interviews by the pool, she left us to retreat inside. That's when the bro talk started, and Jimmy shared his MMA background. The guy could kick the butts of every man in here. Maybe all of us at the same time!

When I initially found out there were ten of us involved in this study, I was prepared to meet a load of guys beating their chests for dominance. Put any group of men together and they size each other up, trying to work out where they fit in the hierarchy.

But this group has been different from the start, and I can't work out why.

I mean, we're all good looking in our own ways. There isn't a man here who doesn't put time in at the gym or hone his body with some other kind of physical exertion. We're all from different professions and have different financial situations. But everyone here seems on an equal playing field. Yes, there's some good-natured teasing, but I haven't once felt like anyone was out to put others down for their own gain.

I guess it could be because we're here for a week and everyone is focusing on relaxing and enjoying themselves as much as they can. It could be because the only woman here is off limits because of her need to keep a professional distance. I've considered a more amusing reason; the fact that we have identical dick lengths and so there's no cock-competition amongst us. An anthropologist could have a field day with this.

"Carson's an artist," Allie says. "And that's a good thing because getting the balance of flavors right in a Thai Green Curry is the most important thing, not the heat."

I grimace at her labeling me an artist. I used to think I had a special talent, but the more years I spend working within the tattoo industry, the less certain I feel about my place within it. I read somewhere that it's called imposter syndrome. Clay

tells me I'm crazy for lacking confidence when I have so many happy customers, but what meets one person's standards isn't enough for someone else. I produce work that's good enough, but it's nowhere near where I want it to be. Sometimes, when I'm alone at night, I can't sleep from the panic I feel, anticipating that the next customer I ink will hate what I've designed.

"Better find someone else to finish this," I respond, the fear about my skill with tattoos now bleeding into my confidence with cooking.

"No way," Jimmy says. "You've been chopping those ingredients like a professional. You gotta stick with it."

I blow out a long breath, trying to expel the anxious hollowness in my chest. As I turn to stir the paste, I catch Allie watching me with a furrow between her brows.

Great.

That's just what I need.

Maybe she'll include this in her article under the subtitle 'Having a big dick doesn't make a confident man.'

I can show her how confident I can be. In the bedroom, I have no doubts about my abilities. If I turned my mind to it, I could make little Miss Allie scream with pleasure. I could show her just how much of an artist I can be with my tongue and my fingers and my cock.

"Maybe you guys should stop leering all over Carson and go watch some TV," Allie says, stepping in to be my savior. "Sorry, Carson. I know what it can be like when people are watching what you're doing. I'll take the peanut gallery over there."

When Allie stands and beckons my observers with her finger, making her way to a low tan leather sofas, my eyes follow her like they're magnetized to her ass. Seriously. I think she's trying to kill us all, walking around in her bikini all day, and now rocking a pair of cutoff jean shorts that barely cover her ass. The bright green top she's wearing, dotted with tiny little holes, isn't exactly hiding anything either, and it's one of those blouses that ties around the neck and hangs open at the back revealing a stretch of skin I want to lick.

Jimmy's gaze does the same thing, and he turns to me, saying nothing but passing on his shared appreciation. A sharp stab of jealousy penetrates just under my ribs as Allie is surrounded by Jimmy, Theron, Gabe, and then more men as they begin appearing freshly showered from upstairs.

I thought offering to cook dinner would be a good way of proving something to Allie, but instead, I'm left out of the group, missing what's being said to make her laugh and whose comment has her twirling a lock of chestnut hair around her finger.

Forcing myself to focus on the task at hand, I chop the lean chicken breast as the sharp aroma of herbs and spices fills the kitchen. The sizzling intensifies as the chicken hits the heat of the pan, and I add vegetables and coconut milk before leaving the curry to simmer on a low heat.

The rice will take around twenty minutes to cook, and while it's absorbing the lightly salted water, I have a little time to join the group.

"So, what's the plan for tomorrow?" Oliver asks Allie. He's reclining on the sofa opposite her, dressed in slacks and a

pressed white shirt, his arms spread over the back of the sofa.

“Well, I want to interview some of you one on one. And maybe we could head down to the beach. I have a task that could be a fun icebreaker.”

“You think there’s still ice that needs to be broken?” Jonas asks.

“I think we cracked the ice when we handed you replicas of our cocks,” Theron comments dryly.

I check the table outside and find it clear. “Where are our cocks?”

“I took them upstairs,” Allie says softly.

“Oh, yeah?” Jimmy leans closer. “Planning on finding out if size really does matter all by yourself?”

“I volunteer my purple plastic cock as tribute,” Tom says.

“Closet Hunger Games fan over there,” I laugh.

Tom raises his hands, grimacing. “I have sisters. It’s impossible to miss all that teen girl stuff.”

“That’s my excuse too.”

“The walls are thin in this place,” Oliver says. “I’ll hear the buzzing if she does.”

Russell stands, stuffing his hands into his pockets as he strolls away from the group. Allie watches him go, her pretty shadow rimmed eyes taking in his disquiet at the conversation. Of all the men here, I don’t get why Russell signed up for this assignment. Everything about his body language and lack of involvement in the conversation screams that he hates the sexual nature of the conversation. It’s like he

feels Allie shouldn't be subjected to gutter talk, and I get that. These kinds of discussions usually happen in flirty situations when people are drunk and on their way to hooking up, not over a coffee table with ten other near-strangers.

"I'm not going to be testing out your dildos," Allie says. "I think they're going to be used as photographic material for the article."

"Is that it?" Jonas scoffs. "My poor dick did not enjoy being stuffed into a cold mold. And if it's just going to get tossed away, it wasn't worth it!"

"Maybe you can take it home as a keepsake?" Stefan suggests. "Something to remember your time here."

"Maybe Allie can keep it to remember me by?" Jonas says. "When she gets home, and the walls are thicker, and Oliver isn't pressing his ear to listen to her every move."

Oliver rolls his eyes, raising his chin. "If you think I'm the kind of man who needs to listen at doors to get off, I've given the wrong first impression."

"I think we can all see what a gentleman you are," Allie says, as the timer rings from the kitchen, prompting me to jump up and check on the progress of dinner. Gabe and Theron follow, and begin to gather plates, silverware, and glasses, slowly carrying everything over to the long dining table.

I take a spoonful of fragrant sauce, letting it sit in my mouth, waiting for my tongue to detect all the flavors. It needs a little more salt, which I sprinkle into the steam and stir. Is it good enough? I think so.



The rice is fluffy and perfect, too, and as I take the two huge pans over to the table, I let out a sigh of relief.

“Food’s ready.”

Clay claps his hands in anticipation. “I hope you’ve made enough for twenty. I’m hungry like the wolf.”

“Hey, I love that song,” Russell says.

“Me too.” Allie takes a seat next to him, casting a broad encouraging smile in his direction. “Duran Duran rock.”

“Isn’t that old people’s music?” Stefan asks, reaching out for the spoon in the curry. “I thought you youngsters would be more into Justin Bieber.”

“Hey...no disparaging remarks about Justin.” Allie scowls as she gazes at the food in front of her. “Bieber Fever Forever!”

“Oh that’s cute! She’s fangirling.” Oliver takes a mouthful of curry and makes an appreciative moaning sound in the back of his throat. “Seriously, Carson, I’m fangirling all over your curry. That is delicious. Did you really make it from scratch?”

“I did.”

“Don’t get too excited,” Clay says. “It’s the only recipe he knows. He wheels his mom’s specialty out whenever he needs to impress someone.”

“Well, I’m touched,” Oliver says, pressing his cheeks like he’s stifling a blush.

“I was talking about Allie,” Clay laughs. “Are you impressed?” He nods pointedly at the only woman at the table as she tries my food. Her eye-closing appreciation has the whole table whooping.

“One point for Carson,” Tom laughs, pointing finger guns in my direction. I feign getting hit in the chest and take a seat at the head of the table, watching as everyone clears their plates in record time.

After dinner, when the cleaning up is done, and everyone is indulging in alcohol, I flop next to Allie on the couch. Her legs are curled up, feet tucked neatly beneath her. With her hair pinned up in a messy style, she has the air of a sexy librarian who’s just desperate to drop the socializing and curl up with a good book. The men in the group have gotten tangled up in a discussion about cars, and Oliver is currently showing Theron and Gabe his sports car in the driveway.

But all I want to do is find out more about Allie.

“I’m still blown away by dinner,” she says, reaching out to touch my arm. I like her tactile nature. Human beings need human touch, and not enough people reach out that way anymore. When I was a kid, my mom was the same, except when my dad was around. He used to yell at her that she’d make me soft if she hugged me too much. I think that’s why she stopped.

“Thanks. It was nothing, though. I’m sure whoever volunteers tomorrow will produce something good.”

“It wasn’t nothing.” Her eyes scan over my left arm, taking in the tattoos there.

“This one is beautiful.” She points to an intricate image of Poseidon’s face, with a trident and huge waves that start at my hand and wrap around the almost photographic image. I

get a lot of positive comments about this one, but when I look at it, all I see is a slight distortion where I didn't quite get the angle of the face right, and the way the trident stands out too much against the more important God image.

It's on the tip of my tongue to criticize the image but at the last minute, I bite my tongue. "Thanks. I try to do my own tattoos where I can."

"You did this?" she asks, running her finger over the wave, eyes wide with fascination.

"I did."

"Wow. I've never wanted a tattoo, but this kind of thing would tempt me."

"There are better artists out there," I say, already praying she doesn't ask me to ink her pristine skin. I'd never trust myself to do her justice.

Clay flops onto the sofa next to me. "Shut up with the modesty," he says. "This guy has a waitlist for his work."

"It was that viral TikTok," I remind him. "One post and people go crazy."

"They wouldn't go crazy if your stuff wasn't worth waiting for, would they?" Allie says.

"People are stupid. They join lines at the mall without even knowing what they're lining up for! They jump on anything if it seems popular."

"Well, if I was into tattoos for myself, I'd pay good money for one of yours," Allie says. "And stop with the self depreciation or you'll insult me."

Clay nods his head in agreement, and I bite my lip.

*You're nothing. You're no one. Just another loser in a long line of losers.* The words buzz around my head like a mantra that only I'm aware of. I know I should have left my father's negativity behind me a long time ago. I haven't spoken to him for eight years, so his poison should have found its way out of my bloodstream by now, but it hasn't. Everything he said has become a part of me, wrapping around my self-belief and strangling it like the kraken's tentacles.

I rub my other arm where Clay inked those tentacles last year. I didn't tell him the significance.

"I was always terrible at art," Allie muses. "But my English teacher told me that I can make beauty with words."

"Are you going to make our cock stories beautiful?" Jimmy asks, unaware that his comment makes Allie's brightness falter for just a second.

"I'll do my best," she says, false sunshine plastered onto her expression, but I see the truth. Allie might not want me to be self-deprecating, but she has a tendency for it herself.

"I want to read something you've written that you're really proud of," I say.

Allie's eyebrows gather high in the center of her forehead, creating a sweet wrinkle of surprise. "You do?"

"Yeah. Why not? We're all here sharing our life stories. Maybe you should share something with us."

"Yeah, Allie. Why don't you tell us what you think the answer to the big question is?" Theron suggests.

“What big question, Theron?” She tips her head, not expecting what I know is coming.

“Does size matter?” he grins. “In your experience, of course.”

I’m immediately defensive of Allie, wanting to step in and tell him to mind his own business. She’s not here to divulge her sexual history. She didn’t sign up for that, so flipping the question on her isn’t fair or right.

“Theron,” I warn.

Allie quickly responds by resting her hand over Poseidon, covering his eyes and immediately pressing calm into my skin. “It’s okay,” she says softly. “I was waiting for someone to ask me, and not relishing the prospect.”

“How come?” Gabe asks, leaning forward.

“Because asking questions is much easier than answering them,” she says, her arms folding over her chest. That one gesture says it all. “But I know it’s not fair to expect you to be honest with me if I can’t be honest with you.”

“So you’re going to spill the beans?” Jimmy asks.

Allie blows out a puff of nervous air and shuts her eyes for a couple of seconds. When she opens them, her back stiffens. “I don’t know the answer to the question, Theron, because I’m a virgin.”

And just like that, the whole room is stunned into silent shock.

## ALLIE

The truth is out now, and as I suspected, my revelation has been met with shock and awe. Jaws are slack. Mouths are hanging open like dehydrated mutts in a Texas summer. Eyes are bugging out. I swear, I think I may have garnered less of a reaction if I just flashed my breasts at them.

“You’re a virgin?” Theron’s voice is comically soft and high, like I’ve pressed my heel gently against his nuts.

“How?” Gabe asks. “I mean, how does a girl as pretty and sexy and awesome as you stay a virgin?”

“Hey, guys! Did you ever think that maybe Allie might want to keep her reasons to herself?” Stefan shoots a warning look to the rest of the group. “That’s a pretty private thing to expect her to talk about.”

“It’s okay,” I say, feeling the weight of everyone’s expectations on me, and heat spilling upward over my neck and cheeks. “I’ve been busy with school and then work. There just hasn’t been anyone in my life that’s been right.”

“Sounds like you have some high standards.” Theron clasps his hands together, fingers gripping, and I get the sense that he’s trying to contain himself. His gray eyes are like liquid steel, swimming with strength and intensity. And intention. So much intention.

Why is it that men see virginity as such a challenge? A thing to take? A barrier to break?

There's no hunting for food anymore. No searching for new lands, or running from dangerous beasts. Maybe virginity has become the final frontier for men who aren't as connected to their masculinity as they should be.

"I guess," I say. "Or I've just been unlucky with the men who've crossed my path."

"Until today." Jonas shoots me a suggestive look, wiggling his brows and biting on his full bottom lip.

"Until today," I agree, laughing.

"So, what would it take to get you to give up the cherry, baby?" Jimmy joins his friend by hitting me with an exaggerated wink and I laugh, holding up my hands.

"Woah. Just because I've shared my status, doesn't mean I'm looking for anyone to change it."

"You're never going to get another chance like this," Clay jokes, resting his head against his palms, as he stretches his back; a classic alpha male posture. "I mean, look at the selection you have here. Ten decent men. Good looking. Employed. Seem to know how to treat a woman, although I guess time will tell! Packing where it counts."

"That's an interesting summary," Oliver says. "What about a good sense of humor?"

"That's it, Daddy. Hit us with the old school dating ads spiel," Jimmy laughs.

"Very funny." Oliver fiddles with his cuff in the way all wealthy men of a certain age do when they're trying to convey status. I stifle a smile at the ribbing between the men and the easy going way they seem to handle each other.

“Rather than listing our attributes, you could ask Allie what she’s looking for in a man.”

Clay glances from Oliver to me and tips his head to one side. “What he said.”

Wow...now I’m under pressure.

If I knew the answer to that, maybe I would have found him by now.

“I don’t know is the true answer.”

“You must have a checklist. All women do,” Theron says.

“All women? Have you surveyed them to check?” Oliver laughs.

“I just mean it’s a common thing.”

I nod, understanding his point. I’ve heard women talk like that before, folding the fingers over as they list the attributes that would make their perfect husband. Money. Status. Education. Family background. I get the need for security. I even get the need to marry up for that, to have aspirations on how children from the union will be raised. But those things by themselves have never hit a chord with me. I’m not saying that they’re not important, just that the men I’ve met who deliver on those attributes are missing something.

Can I put my finger on what it is? I’m not sure. Soul, maybe. The kind of edge that comes with having struggled a little to climb up a rung of the ladder. I need a man who can inspire me to be more, who’ll point out when I stagnate and support me to move into the more risky zone where personal progress and growth can be made. I want a man who makes me laugh, but recognizes when I need a strong emotional foundation. I



need a man who's wise but humble. A hard worker who knows the value of rest and family. Practical but poetic. An artist with his feet on the ground.

And that's the problem. I want a man who doesn't exist.

I've left out the physical attributes because I don't have a type, but it'd be nice if he took care of himself for his long-term health and fitness. The men in my family haven't exactly kept themselves in good physical shape and it's starting to show. When people's main topic of conversation becomes their ailments, upcoming doctors' appointments, and medications, something's really wrong.

"I guess I'll know it when I find it," I say eventually, with a noncommittal shrug.

"That's a cop out, if I ever heard one." Jimmy shakes his head and I look away, feeling bad for disappointing him with my answer.

"Maybe spending time with us all will help you work it out?" Tom says.

"Maybe." I adjust my position, stretching my legs out against the soft leather of the sofa, wishing they'd focus on anything else than me and this conversation.

"Sounds like a challenge to me." Theron fixes me with his gunmetal eyes, the challenge smoldering with intensity, and a shiver of awareness runs through my whole body.

*Dominance.* The word pops into my head as Theron clicks his knuckles again, the power of his grip, and the strength of his body so close it's palpable. Did I know that power in a man is a vital attribute for me before today? I've suspected it. The

moment in romance movies where a man forces a woman against the wall for a searing kiss has always appealed to me. The idea of being restrained and pushed to pleasure-places I've never dared to dream about is what warms me most between my thighs.

There are men in this room I can feel are like that. And maybe more who have that side but don't wear the tendency on their sleeve.

For the time it takes to blink, I consider what it might be like to let down my guard, and allow myself to explore what these men have to offer. It'd be like a taster selection at an exclusive restaurant, or a buffet at an all-inclusive hotel. Just a little sample of lots of flavors could help me work out what I really need and what I really should want.

But I'm not a person comfortable with using others.

And I'm certainly not confident enough to be the kind of woman who reaches out to take what she needs. I'm not Dawn, who could end up on the other side of the world in a relationship with nine perfect men.

I'm Allie, who's still single. Still doing a job that frustrates and disappoints. Still trapped by invisible binds of my own creation.

"We should play a game," Jonas suggests. He holds up an empty beer bottle. "How about spin the bottle?"

There's a rumble of dissent amongst the group, and he throws his head back, laughing. "I didn't mean for us to kiss each other," he says. "I don't swing that way. I meant Allie could spin the bottle, and whoever it lands on, she can kiss."

“This is moving in an interesting direction,” I say quickly.  
“But maybe instead of kissing, I could ask questions?”

“Fun sponge,” Jonas says, but he hands over the bottle anyway.

And just like that, I’m set to play a stupid high school game with ten men.

**10**

# THERON

When Allie takes the empty beer bottle and lays it on the table, I'm transported back to a party at my friend's house when I was thirteen and had my first kiss.

Except this game of spin the bottle is about being interviewed rather than seduced.

Shame.

Allie's lips are plush and pink, and I know that kissing her would be like having a long cool drink on a hot day.

She's a virgin.

Even thinking that word has my cock twitching in my briefs. I'm nearing thirty and most women my age are at the top of single digits, if not into double.

I'm not a misogynist. I don't care about a woman's sexual history so long as we can have fun and enjoy each other. But there is something special about a woman who's been choosy. It feels like it's inbuilt in me to appreciate Allie's innocence. Hell, I'm a caveman and I'll admit it.

*When are you going to find yourself a good girl,* is the mantra that my family has on repeat whenever I go home. Gabe gets it too. They're hoping we'll both go Greek, but if not, they have a long list of important attributes I've chosen to ignore most of my life. Their idea of a good girl is a girl who hasn't slept around. A girl from a good family. A girl who can roll perfectly small stuffed vine leaves and whip up trays of

sweet baklava at a moment's notice. A woman who'll understand all the craziness that comes with being part of a huge family.

I don't know if Allie is any of those things, but I'd like to find out.

She spins the bottle, and it whirls around on the low coffee table, seeking its target. I'm not bothered if it lands on me first. I have nothing to hide. There's never any point concealing your true self from others. That kind of deception only comes back to bite you in the ass later down the line when you're too tired to keep the mask in place. I am what I am. What you see is what you get with me. If that's not good enough, well, I don't give a fuck. Walk on by. There are plenty of other fish in the sea.

The bottle lands on Tom. I still haven't worked the man out. He hasn't spoken a whole lot since we arrived but that's not a bad thing. I appreciate guys who hold their cards close to their chests. He's not moody and his expression is open. I just get the feeling he's quieter than some in the group.

"Trust me to get the first question," he says.

"Fate lands where it lands," I say.

"Okay." Allie seems nervous as she breathes out a huff of air and smooths her hands over her thighs, thighs that I've imagined wrapped around my face more than once. Damn, she has nice legs. Curvy and toned but soft looking too. She places her phone on the table, set to record. "How about this one? What's the most appreciative thing anyone has ever said about your size?"

Tom leans back on the sofa and rubs his face. "I don't know how you guys talk about this stuff without getting embarrassed," he admits.

"Sex is part of life, dude," Jimmy says. "Nothing to be embarrassed about."

Shifting in his seat, Tom clears his throat. "My last girlfriend said she loved the way it made her feel completely full. Like nothing else would ever complete her in the same way."

Allie stares at Tom, and I watch her pupils dilate, darkening her pretty brown irises. Mmmm...interesting. She likes that idea. Being filled and stretched.

"Great. Thanks for that, Tom." Reaching forward, she spins the bottle again with a stronger sense of purpose, like she's trying to regain some control of the situation or her own reactions.

The narrow bottle neck lands on Gabe.

"Yes, cuz." I clap him on the back hard.

"What's the question?" he asks.

"What's the worst thing anyone's ever said about your size?" Allie asks.

Gabe's eyes rise to the left as he thinks of an answer. He rubs his jaw, the part of his face that reminds me so much of his father and my father. "It's not so much about my size, but my first girlfriend used to complain that my dick would wake her up in the morning. I used to climb in through her window and sleep in her single bed. I guess my morning wood was too much for her in such a tiny space."

There's a ripple of laughter as we all imagine the picture he's painted so clearly.

"Time to spin again," Jimmy says, his knee bouncing like he's desperate to run.

"Okay. Who's it going to land on this time?" The nervous anticipation Allie had at the start of the game has been replaced with something more playful. The bottle wobbles on an awkward spin, finally landing on me.

I rub my hands together and the callouses, built up from years of grafting, rasp together. Allie's eyes meet mine and a jolt of electricity seems to pulse between us. "What sexual position feels best?"

I hold her gaze, fascinated that she's chosen this question to ask me. I push my tongue between my lips, moistening them as I think through what to say. Usually, I don't think before I speak, but with Allie, I get the feeling that words mean more than actions, and I want to make this answer count. I'll learn a lot about her depending on what I say.

"I guess it depends who's involved." I shift forward in my seat until my ass is on the edge of the cushion, wanting to get closer to her and hating the table in between us.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, if it's just me and a woman, I like fucking up against the wall. But if it's me and a friend and a woman, then I like to be on the top, controlling the double penetration."

When Allie's cheeks flare a sweet pink color, and her lips part, I get the little indication I was hoping for. Our girl might be a virgin, but she's a closet freak, too.



There's a murmur of what sounds like agreement and interest.

"Have you and Gabe fucked a girl together?" Clay asks.

"Yeah," I say. "More than one."

"Shit. Twenty inches of combined meat." Jonas shakes his head. "That must have been something to witness."

"Now that's what I call a stretch of the imagination." Stefan earns a rumble of laughter from the group.

"It was sexy as fuck," I say. "It just takes a little patience and a lot of trust."

"Trust?" Allie adjusts her seating position. "That's interesting. How do you think trust plays a bigger role in sex when you're the way you are?"

"When a person has a big dick, you mean?" I raise my chin as Allie blushes. It's exactly the response I was hoping for.

"That's two questions for Theron," Carson says. "You have to spin again, Allie."

"Sure." Her eyes drop to the bottle, but I see the flush across her clavicle and the slight uncertainty in her motion. These conversations are getting to her. Our pretty little virgin is turned on.

And not only that.

She's possibly a little tempted, too.

Damn, I hope she wants to give in to the temptation.

I could make her feel so good. I could make her feel like the goddess she is.

And I'm not the only one. I sweep the room, taking in my competition and find nine other men who are worthy of the prize. As Clay said, there are ten decent men here, and I couldn't pick out from us who Allie would choose.

Maybe she wouldn't want to choose just one of us. Maybe she'd want to explore what I was talking about. A little two-on-one can be a lot of fun. I've never gone higher than that, but I know men who have. Ten on one would be hard for a pro to take, forget about someone as innocent as Allie, so she'd need to make a choice at some point.

We carry on playing this modified version of spin the bottle and I get to learn things about other men's cocks and sexual experiences that I'd prefer not to. It's funny that a group of strangers can feel so much like buddies after such a short time, and I wonder if it's got something to do with the constant confessions we're being asked to make.

Men don't tend to share this way when we're hanging out at the bar or watching sports. I know more about these guys than I know about some of my buddies from high school.

At around ten in the evening, Allie yawns and stretches. "I think it's time for me to hit the sack," she says. "Are you guys all set up with everything you need?"

There's a murmur of affirmation, and Allie rises from the sofa and heads to the kitchen, fixing herself a glass of water. The room drifts into silence. All the attention is fixed on her sweet body and glossy hair and the way she walks, which is part sexy sway, and part girly happiness. When she passes, she waves goodnight, and everyone watches her relaxed assent up the stairs like hungry dogs fixating on a damn bone.

Damn, those shorts should be made illegal. Or compulsory. I'm torn.

It's not until the click of her door shutting is heard that every man in the room relaxes.

"Damn," I say, shaking my head. "That girl..."

"She's hotter than fire," Jonas says.

"The way she talks about sex with confidence but then blushes is so damned adorable," Gabe agrees.

"The way she moves," Carson adds.

Oliver shakes his head and I think he's going to object to our objectification, but he doesn't. "She's really something," he says.

"Intelligent." Tom lists, folding his finger over.

"Kind," Russell says, and we all turn to stare at him. The dude barely said a word all night.

"Funny," Clay adds.

"You mean, good sense of humor." Trust Stefan to refer to our earlier conversation.

"Virgin," Jimmy says, finally stating the thing about Allie that most of us have been thinking about.

"How?" I ask. "I mean...just, how?"

"I know, dude." Jimmy rests his feet on the table, relaxing now it's just the guys in the room. "How someone hasn't tapped that yet, I don't know."

"I think it's great," Tom says. "Good for her. There are a lot of assholes out there. If Allie's good at weeding them out,

then more power to her.”

“But it’s such a waste.” Jonas stands, gesticulating with a passion that I understand. “All that pleasure she’s been missing out on.”

“Pleasure isn’t everything,” Russell says.

“And what is?” Jonas turns his attention to the quiet man in the baseball cap.

“Peace.” Russell says the word with a nod that punctuates it like a period at the end of a sentence.

“That’s definitely what you get when you don’t let men into your life to complicate it.” Tom reaches for his beer and takes a long swig. “I get the feeling that Allie doesn’t trust easily. Or maybe it’s that she’s scared to make mistakes.”

“I wouldn’t be a mistake,” I say. “I’d be an awesome ride. Like a rollercoaster. Hold on tight.” Gabe punches me in the shoulder, and we both laugh. “Maybe we should make it our mission,” I say. “One of us should show that beautiful girl what she’s missing.”

“That sounds a little creepy,” Oliver says.

I raise my hands, palms facing out. “That’s not how I meant it. I’ve been watching Allie when we’re talking about sex. She shifts around like she’s turned on. She blushes and licks her lips. She’s thinking about it and stifling herself. It would be like helping her wake up from a long sleep.”

“Sounds like you’re volunteering.” There’s a challenge in Oliver’s voice. A definite challenge that tells me he wants it to be him. Every man in this room wants to be the one. But we

can't all fuck her, can we? Firstly, she wouldn't want that in a million years, and secondly, she'd be a physical wreck after.

"Not volunteering," I say, "But I'm ready to step in if the lady requires me to."

"Chivalry is alive and well." There's no malice in Stefan's statement, but an amusement that tells me he gets what I'm saying. He'd volunteer too if he got the chance.

"So, we make it our mission to show Allie what she's missing, if she wants us too?" I ask the group.

"This is a bad idea," Oliver says, staring at the floor, gritting his teeth hard enough to shatter them.

"Why? She's grown. She's intelligent. She can do what the hell she likes."

He shakes his head but meets my eyes, face grim with challenge. "But she has to be the one to suggest it." The dude is always laying down the law like some frustrated parent.

"Or we could make a proposal," I suggest. "A proposal?" Gabe says, mulling the idea.

"Saying it that way doesn't make it romantic." Russell shakes his head, and I wonder if he might end up being a thorn in my side. If he doesn't want to get involved, that's his business. The door is open, and the outside world waits for us all.

"I've got plenty of romance in me," I say.

The sound of a throat clearing draws our attention to Allie, who's halfway down the stairs. Shit. How much did she hear?

“Hand on heart, I didn’t expect to come down and hear you guys talking about romance,” she says, taking the final few steps.

Jimmy jumps up. “So, what did you come down for?”

“I left my phone down here,” she says, reaching for it.

It’s been sitting on the coffee table the whole time.

“Goodnight,” Allie says for the second time, and we all wave again. When she’s out of earshot, there’s a collective groan.

“Do you think it was still recording?” Stefan asks the question we were all thinking.

“I don’t know,” I say, “but I guess we’re going to find out tomorrow.”



## ALLIE

There's a song on a loop in my head as I strip from my evening clothes, searching out my comfy pajama shorts and button up shirt. *Ten purple vibrating cocks on the bed, ten purple vibrating cocks on the bed, take one down and pass it around, nine purple vibrating cocks on the bed.*

I snigger but it's only half amusement. The other half is nervous laughter because I've been trying to avoid studying the vibrators the men made in any kind of detail. To do so seems invasive, like I'm peeking into their bedrooms, finding them naked and staring at their cocks.

It's ridiculous, of course. The whole point of doing this exercise is so I'll be able to see what they're actually talking about when they're discussing their genitalia. Clever idea, Kirsty. In rubber, their cocks are completely inanimate.

At least, that's what I'm telling myself.

*Just look at them. Stop being such a blushing virgin. There's no one around to see.* I pick up the nearest one, studying the thickness of it, the sheer heft of so much flesh. It has a wide flared head and as I try to wrap my fingers around it, I find that I can't. Whoa...what the hell. How does someone walk around with something this big and unwieldy between their thighs? I thought running with boobs was a challenge. What do they do with this when they're on the treadmill? Strap it to their thigh with duct tape?



I initially resist the urge to look at the initials, but as I stroke my hand down the length, imagining how hot to the touch it would feel in real life, I can't resist anymore.

Russell.

Shit. I wasn't expecting it to be his. There's something so restrained about the man that this cock doesn't really fit with him. This cock is so big and weighty that it seems out of control simply by existing. When they nicknamed him Snake, they got it wrong. They should have called him Baseball-Bat, or Club, or maybe Sex-Weapon-of-Doom-and-Ecstasy instead!

I drop it on the bed as my cheeks begin to heat. Even pressing my cool hands to my flushed skin doesn't reduce the flame I feel across my whole face. It's ridiculous that I'm so embarrassed by looking at cock replicas while alone. How would I ever face seeing these in real life with real men attached to them? I'd be a sweating, trembling tomato!

The next one I pick up isn't quite as thick but it's still big enough to make my eyes water and my legs weak. I perch on the side of the bed, twisting my body so that I can review each of the vibrators in detail and by the time I've put a cock to a name for each of the men downstairs, my panties are shamefully wet.

Embarrassed at my own arousal, I gather the purple penises, resting them on my nightstand like a garish forest. I wash my face with cold water, ignoring the dilated pupils that have darkened my eyes so much they seem unfamiliar. I brush my teeth vigorously, trying to focus on mundane tasks rather than the men downstairs and their appendages.

*This has been a good exercise.* It's important that I try to deal with the out-of-control parts of my brain and body in private. I'll be more composed tomorrow. I'll be able to hold it together in front of all the men and continue to gather the information I need to write the article.

I should wrap up some of the interview information from today but I'm too tired and more than a little restless. The distant rumble of male laughter emanates from downstairs, tickling up my spine and setting the hair on the back of my neck rising. When I turn off the light and slide into bed, the coolness of the sheets is a welcome relief, but my mind won't stop turning over thoughts that make my internal temperature soar. My clit is swollen and aching to be rubbed in slow tight circles and I'm so restless that even tossing and turning doesn't do anything to settle me.

I blow out a puff of frustrated breath at the fact that there are ten good looking men downstairs and ten vibrators on my nightstand, but relief is out of my grasp. I'm mostly frustrated that Dawn would never find herself in this situation. She goes for what she wants, with no regrets and not for the first time, I wish I was more like her.

You only live once. I remember when she told me about her tattoo, I was horrified. But I get her fascination with the phrase. I understand the fear that comes with feeling life is passing by and nothing exciting is happening.

In the darkness, I can make out the shape of each vibrator, standing together like soldiers ready to advance. I lick my lips, imagining what it would feel like to use one of them to ease the ache.

I shouldn't. It'd be like taking advantage of someone downstairs without their knowledge.

It'd feel shady and wrong.

An invasion of privacy.

But it'd also feel good.

I can almost imagine it. The slickness between my thighs covering the smooth head. The gentle vibrations stimulate me until I cry out with release. I could bring myself to orgasm, wash it and pretend nothing happened. No one would have to know. I could even see what it would feel like to be penetrated by something so big. It'd be my first time feeling that delicious spreading sensation I've read about in romance novels and Tom talked about downstairs. The first time I would discover why women have such a fascination with well-hung men. It'd be strictly about educating myself in this field of study I find myself engaged in.

Is it a waste for it not to be with a real man, in the flesh, with all the associated feelings?

Maybe.

But maybe it'd take me a step closer to feeling brave enough to let go with someone in real life. And it would definitely give me a perspective on this article without having to do something crazy with anyone downstairs.

Even if I wanted to, how would I choose between them?

I snake my arm from beneath the sheet, reaching out for the nearest vibrator, not wanting to know who it belongs to, knowing I wouldn't be able to look them in the eye tomorrow if I did.

Wriggling out of my shorts and panties, I spread my legs and run the head of the vibrator over my clit and lower, gathering enough slickness to make easy progress. I turn the little dial at the top just slightly, leaving it on the lowest setting, cringing at the low hum but confident the men downstairs won't be able to hear. The first buzz of it against my clit is like the fizz of sour candy on my tongue. The head of the cock is so big, it's like running the end of a baseball bat between my legs. I shift my hips, rocking a little to adjust the pressure and position, closing my eyes to imagine what it would be like to have a man looming over me, big cock in hand, sliding it between my labia, teasing and teasing until I'm at the point of no return.

I imagine myself begging. *Please. Please.*

Men's faces enter my mind. Carson, Theron, Gabe, Oliver, Jonas, Clay, Stefan, Jimmy, Tom and Russell. They flick through my vision like one of those old-fashioned spinning image creators that turned static pictures into something jerkily resembling real life. The nerve endings in my pussy ignite to the point of sweet, torturous pain as I imagine how he must have looked and felt, creating this vibrator for me.

Frantically, I push the vibe lower, pressing it against my entrance, relishing the force of anticipated penetration.

How would each of the men in this house fuck me? Who would be gentle and who would be brutal? Who would hold me down and who would give me freedom to move and take my own pleasure? Who'd enjoy licking me and who'd want my mouth on them? Who'd whisper deliciously dirty things in my ears and who'd fuck punctuated by harsh breaths and grunts?

I want to know.

Being on the outside of this conversation with them is like staring into a candy shop window and not being able to open the door and taste what's inside

Pushing harder on the vibrator, my flesh begins to give way and I arch my neck, eyes still pinched firmly closed, body pulling tight like a drawn bow. Am I really going to do this? Am I really going to push this huge thing inside me?

When I use my finger to circle my clit, the answer becomes immediately obvious. Yes. Yes. Oh fuck, yes!

I'm so slick that once it's inside just an inch, forcing it further is like slicing chocolate cake with a warm knife. I can't believe how good it feels. Rocking into the penetration I bite my lips to hold in the groan that wants to escape. It goes deep, deep enough for me to take the whole thing, and I'm shocked. Isn't a dick this size supposed to bottom out? From the way the men downstairs spoke, all the women they've been with before have struggled to take them all the way.

The slick sounds of my arousal are louder than the vibrator, but I don't care.

There's a single thought in my mind, a pinprick of focus, as I chase my way over the hill to orgasm.

Size does matter. It does. It really does.

And the release is good. So, good. Better than anything I've ever achieved at my own hand.

After, I hold the vibrator still, keeping it inside me while my muscles ripple around it, faces flashing through my mind

again, a loop of gorgeous men who could do this for me in real life.

How much better would it be to feel them lose themselves in me, too? To feel that release. To know the power of the man behind the ten inches of cock that rocked my world, and the other men who could do the same.

I want to know, but I can't.

I have to clear my mind of all these inappropriate thoughts, but how can I when I know a little of what it would be like to just let go and take what I want?

When I've finally come down from the precipice of pleasure, I gently ease the vibrator from inside me, hating the emptiness it leaves behind. My skin is slick with sweat, which cools as I slide from beneath the sheets and pad to the bathroom. Standing on the cold tiles, I soap and rinse the purple rubber until all evidence of my lapse in control is washed away. Looking at myself in the mirror is hard because I come face to face with a flushed cheeked, wide-eyed version of myself I don't recognize. Is this what women look like after good sex? Or am I just so inexperienced at this kind of thing that my body has reacted more extremely? Maybe it's just the shame of what I've done?

I wish I had someone to talk to about everything going on here. Dawn would listen in a heartbeat, but she'd be too surprised at my innocence, and I can't deal with having to explain. It would have been easier if I were going through these experiences at the same time as my friends. Now I'm out on an island, alone in my current status as a virgin.

*It doesn't have to be this way.*

Everything could be different in a heartbeat.

All I'd have to do is put on some sexy lingerie and walk down those stairs, and I'd find out all the answers to my questions.

But I'm not that girl.

I'm not brave enough to take what I want.

If it's meant to be, it's meant to be is my mom's favorite phrase and I've always believed it too.

As I climb back into bed, reaching out to rest the dildo next to its gathering of waiting friends, I accept that nothing as exciting as my fantasies is likely to happen to me any time soon.

Which is a shame because unlike many of the ex-girlfriends of the men downstairs, I seem to be able to handle ten inches with no problem!

**12**



# ALLIE

I wake early, as the ocean that lulled me to sleep at night drags me from my dreams. The view that greets me when I open the blinds beats the usual city landscape I'm faced with back home. The cerulean ocean, stretching as far as the eye can see, somehow settles the daily butterflies I tend to wake up with. Butterflies telling me I'm not happy and settled. Butterflies telling me I need to do something, move on, fly away.

It's good to feel a little calm. Good and strange. Maybe I have a thing for the ocean. Or maybe getting away from my office and colleagues and the frenetic city pace agrees with me. Or could it be that the orgasm has left me with a warm glow?

Who knows?

My computer rests unopened on my desk and my phone is set to silent on my nightstand. I'm disconnected from everything that's familiar and plunged into this whole surreal new reality. Last night, I didn't have an opportunity to listen through the recordings from yesterday and transcribe. I should be doing more writing, but the interview process is keeping me engaged.

Thoughts of work are confining and the view calls to me, so I throw on a clean teal two-piece, stuff my computer into a bag with a towel, grab my phone, and make my way downstairs. The kitchen is silent and pretty tidy. Only a few

bottles have been left on the counter, evidence the men stayed up drinking together.

The bromance continues.

In the fridge, I search out the ready-made iced coffee and pour myself a glass. There are individually wrapped chocolate croissants in the pantry which look delicious. Prepared with my to-go breakfast, I head past the pool, down the stairs and to the beach.

It's so early and the place is deserted save for a few white birds which swoop from the cloud dotted blue sky toward the frothy ocean water as though they're hunting for something I can't see. I rest my coffee on the sand, shake out my towel and settle myself for a quick breakfast and to catch up on work. My phone acts as a hotspot so I can check my emails. There aren't too many which is a relief. Being out of the office is a recipe for disaster when it comes to administrative organization. I ignore everything because nothing seems urgent, and my mind is too taken up by the confessions of the ten men who are currently sleeping.

I find the audio from last night and set it to play, not too loudly in case someone comes, and I don't notice. Giant cock conversations aren't exactly for public consumption.

My typing speed is fast enough for me to keep up with the audio, and I find myself smiling at the funnier revelations even though I'm listening to them a second time around. When it gets to the end, I hear myself saying it's time to hit the sack and then the sound of the faucet as I pour a glass of water.

Then we all say goodnight on the recording, and I suddenly realize that I never switched off the recording app. It kept

recording as the men were talking and I was upstairs.

I press the stop button on the replay and bite my lip. What comes next in this audio is a conversation not meant for my ears. A conversation between ten men.

I shouldn't listen to it.

I should edit the file to delete the last section of audio and maintain their privacy. I wouldn't like it if someone intercepted my private conversation.

A bird swoops close to me, probably eying the remaining part of the croissant that I was saving. I pop it in my mouth to remove the temptation and chew, mulling over my options.

I'm not an intrusive person usually. I value my privacy and respect others' privacy, too. I'd never go through a boyfriend's phone, for example. But these men are here to provide me with revelations, and there's a nugget of intrigue burning inside me right now.

There might be something on the recording that I could use to make this article extra special. At worst, I could find out if they're telling me the truth and being open. It can't be easy to answer my questions when I'm sitting in front of them, listening and judging. Maybe when I'm not in the room, and bro-code is in full force, they're happier to talk.

This is my one chance to find out.

My journalistic instinct is a demanding thing.

I press the button, deciding I can always stop if I feel icky about what I'm hearing.

But as the seconds tick past, and I hear what they were saying about me after I left the room, I can't stop listening.

Jesus.

Ten men want to deflower me. They want to strip me of my virginity in a way that seems almost medieval.

Everything that I thought about last night was on their minds, too. Just hearing them say the words has me slick between my legs. This kind of macho bullshit shouldn't turn me on, but it seems my innate biological impulses win in a competition with my rational mind.

"Hey, Allie," a deep voice calls out behind me.

I turn to find a stream of men loping down the stairs. Dressed in swim shorts, they're all ready for a day at the beach.

"We've been looking for you all over," Carson says. With the sun directly behind him, I have to hold my hand up to see more than a darkened form.

"Russell said you might be down here." Oliver drops down onto the sand next to me smelling good, of alpine forests and fresh spring water and when he stretches his long lean legs out in front of him, I notice what nice feet he has. "What are you doing?"

"Just transcribing the audio from last night," I say, wondering if anyone will show any reaction to the revelation.

"Really?" Oliver's voice seems a little higher and tighter than usual. "Did you get everything you needed?"

“Sure did.” I fold down the top of my computer screen and post it back into my bag, hoping that will give him the hint that I’m not going to divulge any more information. He clears his throat, and I catch a glance between him and Theron. The Greek was the main one involved in driving that discussion forward. He’s looking at me like a new land to conquer. Alexander the Great, eat your heart out.

Out of the corner of my eye, I spot Russell conversing with someone who’s not part of our group. As I squint to get a better look, I realize the neighbors I watched enjoying their pool next door are taking a stroll up the beach.

Three gorgeous men - who I suddenly notice are triplets - one beaming woman, and adorable twin boys who are both holding their momma’s hands. Intrigued, and eager to get away from Oliver’s questions, I leave my bag where it is, and jump up, making my way closer.

“Hey,” I say, taking in the woman’s pretty cream crochet beach cover-up and brown gladiator sandals. Effortless beach-chic.

“Hey.” The woman smiles broadly in a way that involves her whole face, lighting up her prettiness from the inside. “I’m Natalie. We’re neighbors.” She indicates her head toward the house next door. “At least, temporarily. We’re staying at my father-in-law’s place for a mini vacation.”

“Nice,” I say. “This is a beautiful spot to have a home.”

“It really is. We try to come up here as much as possible. The kids love it.”

I glance down at the sweet dark-haired boys who look so much like the adult triplets, it's as though they've been cloned.

"And you guys?" she asks, eyeing the group with interest.

"I'm writing an article," I say. "The guys are my interviewees."

"Wow...Interesting. I'm a photographer. Mostly studio stuff now, but I used to be involved in eco-photography and still dabble. My pictures are sometimes picked up by magazines."

We grin at each other, and I feel as though I've met a kindred spirit. At least, someone I could form an easy and interesting friendship with.

"How long are you here for?" she asks.

"Six more days."

Her eyes scan behind me at the various groups of men talking, and then to Russell, who's been joined by Carson and Clay talking to the triplets she's with.

"That's a lot of masculine energy you have around you."

"Tell me about it." I roll my eyes like a wife who's grown tired of her husband. Except there's not just one man to be annoyed by, but ten.

Her laugh is warm and deep and she leans in conspiratorially. "It's not so bad." Her eyes drift to the triplets. "Having lots of men around, I mean."

"Which one's yours?" I ask.

"All of them," she whispers, her eyes searching my face for a reaction.

I wasn't expecting that and I'm not quick enough to stifle my shock before she notices. Clearing my throat, I try to rescue the situation. "So you're polyamorous?"

"Yeah," she says. "I know it's not very common and I didn't set out wanting that kind of relationship. They grew on me and then I couldn't imagine choosing between them." She shrugs and I raise my eyebrows, awed at the laid-back way she describes something so extraordinary. I thought Dawn was a freak for her relationship choices, but Natalie seems perfectly ordinary. I want to know more but with the kids tugging at her arms and her men glancing over to see if she's done talking, it's not the time to ask questions.

"Would you be up for taking a walk along the beach sometime?" I say. "You could bring your camera and tell me all about your fascinating life. I need some female input into my article."

"As long as it's anonymous," she smiles. "I don't want to be the next big thing in your magazine. Not that our relationship is a secret. Mason's an artist with a pretty high profile. It's not possible to maintain total privacy."

"Of course," I say. "I have a friend in the same situation as you. I just find it fascinating."

"Looks like you could have the makings of a great harem yourself." She grins as the twins get bored and wriggle from her grip, running along the sand toward the lapping waves.

"As if." I glance back at the scene she's assessing, finding Tom, Jimmy and Jonas running into the ocean, leaving an arc of foaming spray behind them. Stefan and Oliver are engrossed in a conversation, Oliver facing away. Theron and

Gabe are sprawled out on the sand, soaking up the early morning sun and laughing, probably at something crude.

“Do their personalities not match up to external appearances?”

It feels unfair to let someone reach that conclusion when, in actual fact, they’ve all made a pretty good first impression. I can’t exactly tell her that it’s me who wouldn’t be enough. Me who wouldn’t cope with the pressure of a situation like that. Time to come up with some excuses. “It’s not that. They’re surprisingly awesome. It’s just that they don’t all know each other. There are a few who do. It’s not like brothers or friends who’d feel more comfortable getting into that kind of arrangement.” What am I even saying, trying to justify any of this?

“Yeah. I guess it helps for them to have some kind of connection beforehand,” she says. “But as long as everyone gets along...” She trails off, her eyes dancing with possibilities. “It sounds like you’ve thought about it!”

I wave her away, dismissing her suggestion out of hand. “I wouldn’t be enough for that kind of relationship. There isn’t enough of me to go around.”

“Our capacity for love is infinite,” she says dreamily. “Now, time can be an issue. But it’s better to spend time on the men you love than swiping through never ending social media.”

“Now that is true.”

“Natalie, are you ready?” one of the gorgeous triplets says.

“Sure. Can you get the boys?” She tips her head in the direction of the twins who are squealing as the waves lap over



their toes.

The triplet with the tattoos and the one who spoke are quick to grab their offspring, lifting them so they are both perched high on their shoulders. There's more excited squealing and Natalie threads her arm through the arm of the remaining triplet. "Let's go," she says, then turns her attention to me. "Maybe we could meet tomorrow morning at 8am. I love that early morning light and I can get some great images?"

"Yeah. That would be awesome."

"Cool. See you later, Allie." Natalie raises her hand in a wave, and I watch the sweet, unconventional family make their way down the beach.

"Nice people," Russell says.

"Yeah," I agree. "Three husbands must be a lot of work."

His neck twists fast in my direction. "What...?" His attention is drawn back to the retreating forms, eyes narrowed in assessment.

"Yeah. They're all one big happy family," I say.

Clay clears his throat. "You're serious? I mean, I knew there were people who live that way, but I've never met anyone who does."

"My friend has multiple partners. Nine. And her friend has eight!"

"Nine?" Russell's voice sounds strangled with surprise.

"Yeah. She met nine friends, and they were happy to share her rather than make her choose between them."

“They must be happy with scraps,” Carson says. “Like, how does one woman satisfy all those men?”

“If you met her, you’d understand how. She’s a force to be reckoned with, and I don’t think they keep their sex life one-on-one, if you know what I mean.”

Carson shifts his stance and folds his big arms across his chest. It’s a defensive stance which suggests he isn’t convinced. “Maybe that could make a difference, I suppose.”

“What? Lining up for your turn?” Clay isn’t convinced.

“I guess there must be benefits,” Russell says. He touches the brim of his cap, tugging it a little lower against the sun. “More people to share the work of a home. More breadwinners. More support.”

He doesn’t meet my eyes, but I feel a thread of connection between us. A subtle shift in the air when he reveals his practical thoughts about relationships. I like that his first thought isn’t about the practicalities of sex but the practicalities of life. “That’s what Dawn says.”

“Are we ready to swim?” Stefan calls out. His back is to the ocean and his arms are outspread, revealing the perfect muscular form that makes up his upper body.

I have a million other things to do right now, but a swim in the cool ocean will clear my head and cool my raging hormones.

“I am,” I say, strolling to the water’s edge and not hesitating when the frigid foam laps over my bare feet.

As the rest of the group follows, I decide to break into a run before anyone can dunk me under. A feeling washes over me

that getting through the rest of this week is going to be way more taxing than I could have imagined.



## GABE

Allie listened to the audio from last night. It's written all over her pretty flushed face. It's in every slightly awkward glance she's made in my direction today and she's not just looking at me that way, but at every man staying in this house.

She knows what we were discussing, and she isn't angry about it. If anything, she's jittery, and that says a lot. Theron has a theory that I'm not sure I agree with yet. He reckons she's a frustrated virgin, not one who's looking to maintain her innocence.

I don't see how that could be the case. She might blame her status on being busy, but there's more behind that statement. She's too sweet and interesting and beautiful to have found it difficult to find a man. Hell, a lot of men would fuck between the cushions of their couch if they were horny enough. Men aren't discerning. It's the reason human beings haven't died out, even during famine and war. Babies continue to be born through times of great hardship because men will seek a release and not worry about the consequences.

Theron thinks she's shy, but I don't get that either. She's confident enough to be comfortable talking to ten strangers about the most intimate subject matter.

But Theron isn't an idiot. He's better than most at sizing people up. It's why he runs such a successful building firm. If he has a bad feeling about a customer, he won't work for

them. We have a much lower rate of taking on problem clients who don't pay for the work than most of our friends in the same business. It's like he has a sixth sense.

Allie's up to her neck in the water by the time I get close. She holds her nose and ducks under, emerging with slick dark hair and her eyelashes peppered with water droplets that shine like diamonds until she swipes them away with her hands.

"Wow. It's cold," she gasps, jumping so a wave doesn't rush over her head.

"It's good," I say. "Better than a cold shower!"

"I wouldn't know," she says. "I have mine steaming hot."

Now my mind has moved from poetic thoughts about her eyelashes, to her body slick and naked in a steaming shower cubicle. I swear, this week is going to be the end of me.

"Hey, Allie," Theron says, bounding over to us, his arms pumping. "What did you think of the audio from last night? Did you get everything you needed?"

Her lips part, and despite the cold, a flush blooms on her cheeks. "You all answered the questions with what felt like a lot of honesty," she says quickly, but her attempt to dismiss the true reason behind his question is obvious. He's right. She did listen.

"And the conversation we had when you weren't in the room? What did you think of that part?"

I want to punch my cousin for being such an asshole today. I know he thinks he's doing Allie a service by pushing her out of the comfort zones she's holding herself captive in, but shit, he

could be a little more tactful. Allie's eyes lower and she folds her lips in, licking the salt water from them.

"You certainly had a lot of nice things to say about me." She addresses the swelling ocean in front of her as though she's lost the confidence to look any of us in the eye. My hand itches to reach out to her, to let her know that despite all of Theron's bravado, that none of us would ever put any pressure on her, but she doesn't know me well enough to believe the innocence of my intentions.

"And they were all true," I say softly, wanting to soothe her before she finds an excuse to walk away, and we lose this chance to keep a connection with her.

"And the other part?" Theron rubs his hand over his beard as the rest of the group gather around, sensing something in the air that requires their attention.

Her eyes flick up to meet his gaze, surprising me. I didn't think she'd have it in her to challenge him this way...not about this.

"The proposal," he says.

"I don't think you fully outlined that part." The bite of sass in her tone will be like a red rag to a bull. Theron likes his women to have fire as well as ice.

"And he doesn't have to now," Oliver says, stepping forward. I don't know what this dude's problem is, but he needs to realize that he's not the boss of us, despite being one of the oldest here. In fact, he probably is close to my dad's age because my parents had me stupidly young, but

that's beside the point. He doesn't get to decide for any of us, certainly not Allie.

"Maybe she wants him to," I say, stepping in to back up my cousin. That's what family does, even when they're skating on thin ice or about to smash their way through a wall and regret it after.

"Do you?" Carson asks her. "I mean, do you want to know where Theron was going with that conversation?"

Allie's shoulders curl forward, and her chin lowers, but her body language doesn't stay that way for more than a couple of seconds before she finds the steel in her spine. When she lifts her eyes to Theron again, it's with challenge bubbling in their depths.

"Well, it would seem unfair not to when he obviously wants to discuss it with me."

Oliver makes a sound in his throat that sounds both surprised and proud. I can tell he likes it when Allie finds her confidence.

"Well," Theron says, not afraid to take the bait. He folds his arms over his chest, making his biceps swell and his shoulders broaden, something Allie can't fail to notice. "We were just saying..."

"You were saying," Stefan interjects.

"I was saying," Theron corrects, "that maybe you weren't a virgin out of choice and maybe you'd be interested in us offering you our services this week. You know, to help you research the topic you're here to explore."



“Oh, it’s for research purposes?” Allie folds her arms, mirroring Theron’s body language and they enter a sort of standoff, struggling to maintain their straight postures as the waves buffet them.

“Yeah. Well. Not only for research. I’m sure there will be a whole lot of pleasure involved, too.”

“Really? Is that a guarantee?”

“Abso-fucking-lutely,” he says, and then he presses a hand over his heart dramatically. “In fact, I’m hurt that you’d assume otherwise. My word is my bond. If you pick me, I promise to rock your world.”

“And is it only you who’s making this proposal?” she asks, looking around the group, effectively trapping us all. If we agree, we’re stepping into the hornet’s nest if she’s pissed about the whole thing. If we say no, we’re leaving Theron as the only option for her if she’s actually interested in changing her sexual status, and no one wants to miss out on that chance. Even Russell, who seems the most formal and reserved of all of us, has puppy dog eyes when it comes to Allie.

For what feels like an eon, no one says a word. Then Jimmy jumps in. “We’re all making it. The choice is yours.”

The sun emerges from behind a soft white cloud and the glare forces Allie to raise her hand to shield her eyes. For a moment, I can’t make out what she’s thinking, and the stretch of silence feels so awkward I want to duck my head under the cool water and suppress the raging blood pumping beneath the surface of my skin, but I don’t want to miss Allie’s response.

Time stretches and Tom shifts uncomfortably. Jonas clears his throat and we all turn to find him smiling.

“What?” Theron snaps, angry that such a pivotal moment has been interrupted.

“She used one of the dildos last night,” he says.

“What?” Russell barks, mirroring Theron’s annoyed tone. “How could you know that?”

“I went to find her this morning, and her door was open. The dildos were on her nightstand, all standing tall and proud, against the wall, but there was one set apart.”

“That doesn’t mean anything,” Oliver snaps, but now all our eyes are on Allie, whose face is strawberry red.

“Yeah, you’re right,” Jonas says. “Except that one had the fresh scent of hand soap instead of rubber.”

“You’re a sick fuck.” Jimmy shoulder barges his friend, but it’s good natured rather than aggressive. “You seriously went into someone’s room and sniffed a dildo.”

“I did,” Jonas says, “and you know why?”

“Fuck,” Oliver mutters, shaking his head, but he doesn’t order Jonas to stop telling his story.

“Why?” Carson asks.

“Because it had my initials on it.”

“Shit,” Clay says, rubbing his hand over his tattooed arm. We all turn to Allie and find her with her mouth open. It’s like she started to formulate a denial but realizes that it’s too late. She’s been caught in the act and now she has to face the consequences.

Theron was right. She is thirsty, but it's more than that. She needed release but didn't turn to any of us, at least not in the flesh. She wanted to know what it would feel like, but without any of the physical contact or emotional connection. That's kind of sad in a way. But also empowered. She took what she needed.

"I don't even know what to say," she mutters, her hand rubbing her upper arm, mirroring Clay.

"You don't have to say anything," Oliver says.

"Jonas should apologize for invading your privacy," Tom adds.

Jonas holds his hands up, palms facing Allie, his eyebrows skyward. "I'm sorry, Allie. If that's how you feel. I was genuinely looking for you, and then...well...my curiosity got the better of me."

"It's okay," Allie says softly. "You know...it is kind of like I invaded your privacy, too."

Jonas steps a little closer, rubbing his hand over his blond straight hair as though he's tidying himself up before turning on the charm. "Did it feel good?" he asks, smooth and seductive. My eyes drift to Theron who's folded his arms again, watching his thunder being stolen, but with a half-smile playing at his lips.

Allie raises her chin, ever defiant despite the circumstances. "It did," she says. "Not that I have anything to compare it to."

"But you could," Theron says. "That's what I was going to propose. We're all here at your disposal, Allie. Forget the cold hard rubber of those things upstairs. You could find out the

truth behind the question you're trying to answer. Really put some depth into the article you're trying to write."

Stefan snorts, ducking lower into the water so it laps over his shoulders. "Of course, it's all about the pursuit of journalism," he says. "Nothing to do with you wanting to get your rocks off."

"Of course it's about that, too. For all of us. I'm not made of stone and neither is Allie. I'm just painting a full picture."

"So kind of you to be so thoughtful of my career," Allie says dryly.

"You can't tell me that after last night, you're not intrigued to go further." Everyone in the group is following the back and forth between Theron and Allie like an Olympic ping-pong final.

"Intrigued. That's a word."

"I get the feeling you feel bad for wanting to experience normal human sensations," he says. "I mean, I get that there's a lot of guilt-tripping out there about women and sex, but you write about this stuff all the time. Surely you don't hold those feelings about your own life and experiences?"

"Check out Theron, the feminist." Russell adjusts his cap on his head, something I've noticed him do whenever he speaks. "I think Allie's had enough of our attention."

Allie holds out a hand and rests it on Russell's forearm, and a bolt of jealousy runs through me. It's not like me to feel so furious about something like this. I don't own Allie and she certainly doesn't owe me a thing. But the touch of her palm is something I want for myself. "It's okay, Russell. I don't need

anyone in this group to defend me. I'm perfectly capable of handling all of you."

"I'm sure you are," Jonas says with a wink.

"You think I couldn't?" Allie asks, bristling with challenge. Her hair has begun to curl in the sun and breeze, and across her nose, a dusting of freckles is starting to form. With her jaw gripped with determination, she's such a contrast of sweet and soft and hard and fierce. My ideal woman.

"It doesn't matter what we think or want," I say, finally finding my voice. "What matters is what you think and want. What my cousin is trying to say is that the ball is in your court, Allie. We can spend this week talking a lot about whatever you need to write your article. We'll have a great time, and you can walk away with some new knowledge. Or, we can show you instead of tell you, and you can write the article from experience. The choice is yours."



## ALLIE

The choice is mine. Gabe managed to summarize the situation in a way that didn't sound completely terrible, and I'm grateful.

The ball is in my court, but I feel like a rookie playing with ten champions. A ball girl tidying the court for ten legends. I'm so out of my league it's laughable. But beneath my uncertainty is the memory of last night. It's the partial knowledge I have that rests beneath my skin like the worst kind of temptation. It's Natalie's words and Dawn's stories and every other hungry part of me that wishes I could just pick up my silverware and stuff my face like everyone else seems to be able to.

Dawn and I are not so different. We're the same age, and roughly the same attractiveness level. We have the same level of education and similar family backgrounds in terms of money. And yet she's open to every experience that comes her way, and all I can feel when faced with the same opportunity is fear.

There's a level of risk that comes with every experience.

But what's really the level of risk here? I'm not going to fall for any of these men in the remaining six days we have here. They're all intending to go home and live their lives a little richer for the experience of spending time at this luxury beach house, answering my questions.

They could tell people what we did, but I don't get that vibe about them, and I'm not famous enough for anyone to truly care. It would be my word against theirs, anyway.

I just feel so childish for having a problem with having sex, almost like it's mentally held me in a place I was when I was in high school, nervous about prom and seeing the boy I liked in the hallway. The woman I want to be shouldn't feel any of this.

"You don't need to answer right away," Gabe says, seeing my hesitation and wanting to smooth it away. He has such kind eyes, the type that suggests that he's a good person through and through. I appreciate his care and consideration of my feelings as much as I find it infuriating that he can see through me so easily.

"How would it work?" I say, shocked that the question has found its way from a thought to something out there for the consideration of others.

"However you want it to," Gabe answers, before anyone else has a chance. Theron, with his bulging muscles and clenched jaw, seems like he'd like to dictate the rules for everyone, but his cousin isn't giving him the chance. Good for Gabe. The power dynamics in this place are crazy.

However I'd want it to. That's like offering an all you can eat buffet to a person who only eats peanut butter sandwiches. I don't know what I want. That's the whole reason I'm having this ridiculous conversation.

"So, if I picked just one of you, you'd all be fine to stand back?" To be honest, the fact that they're all into this idea of showing me the sexual ropes has me baffled. If there were



other women here, they'd probably have shown me zero interest. Maybe that's what I should do. Invite some friends over to defuse the sexual tension.

Except that isn't what I want. Not really. Having ten men look at me like they're ready to devour me is as thrilling as it is terrifying.

Theron makes a noise that sounds a lot like a growl and shakes his head. "I'm not stepping aside for anyone willingly."

"Well, if we're getting all alpha male and shit, then neither am I," Carson says.

"I think you can safely assume that none of us is willingly giving up the chance to be with you, Allie." Jonas cocks his head to one side, and then flicks the water from his slick hair the way Justin Bieber used to when he was a teen.

"So, it's all or nothing?" The squeaky high pitch to my voice doesn't exactly communicate confidence. In fact, it does exactly the opposite.

What would 'all' even look like? Dawn might be confident enough to exist at the center of a giant harem, but that's not me. Then I remember what she told me about Kyla and how her multiple-relationship started. She went out on dates with eight men that ended up in her experiencing eight kinks. Somehow, after all of those different experiences, she realized she wanted to be with them all.

I should pick 'nothing'. I should tell these men who are gathered around me like bees around their queen that this whole discussion is deeply foolish and misguided. I should go back to my room to take a really cold shower, put on some

business attire and face the group like the professional I'm supposed to be.

I should, but I don't want to. I want to know what it's like to be with each of them. To feel the rough callouses of Theron's palms and know if Jimmy fucks with as much pent up energy as he lives his life. I want to feel Russell let go of what he's holding coiled up inside and see if Oliver likes to be in control in bed, too. I want to see Carson and Clay's tattoos and trace the inky lines with my fingers and tongue, and rest in the warm embrace of Gabe. I want to run my fingers through Stefan's salt and pepper hair and let Tom touch me with gentle hands. I want to know if Jonas's cock feels as good in real life as the replica.

Most of all, I want to feel free, spread my wings, soar toward the sun, and not worry if I get burned.

I've not known these men long, but the conversations we've had mean I know them in a way I've never known a man before, and with more days to go, that feeling of connection is only going to get stronger.

"This is crazy," I mutter, blowing out a long breath that leaves a hollow ache in my chest.

"Crazy," Gabe says, "But awesome?"

He's right. Crazy and awesome. Two words that shouldn't go together but totally do.

I duck down under the water again, and the rush of the ocean around me is white noise for my soul. When I emerge, I know what I'm going to say, even though the very taste of the words feel strange and exotic on my tongue.

“I’m in,” I say, only to be met with surprised silence.



# JONAS

As we all stare at Allie, not quite believing she's actually agreed to Theron's out-there proposal, I grin and shake my head because I know I played a big part in making this thing happen. Allie said yes because I exposed her physical need. She's been hiding behind her self-control and self-denial for too long when what she needs is what we all need. To feel a connection with another human being. To find out about our own sexuality and embrace it.

I usually train every day, running off any pent-up energy or memories that I wish were buried, making sure that this body that earns me a living stays in perfect condition. Today, my body aches for something else.

Sweet Allie with her mysterious brown eyes and lips that are perfectly pouty with a cupid bow I want to lick. Sweet Allie with curves for days, and a total lack of awareness of just how sexy she is. Sweet Allie, who pretends she's happy being one thing but really craves to be another.

I recognize that duality. So much of the way I act around other people is a shield. The jokiness helps me feel in control, and people love to laugh. I got kicked in the head a lot less in foster care when I was funny instead of angry.

Being in this house with so many people reminds me a little of the good times I had growing up. The best foster home I spent time in had eight other kids, and I was never lonely. It was the only time I felt like part of a family.

Before I get a chance to reply, Theron's asking how Allie wants it to work. The poor girl looks like her brain might explode from the stress and that isn't what sex should be about.

"We'll work out something between us," I say. "And if it's good for Allie, it'll be good for us."

Allie's shoulders lower, as the burden shifts from her to us. "Thanks," she mouths. "So, I'm going to head inside to work. I'll see you guys for lunch?"

"I'm cooking," Tom says.

"Please tell me you have some culinary skills," Carson says. "I'm famished already."

Allie swishes her hips as she makes her way from the water, raising her hands to squeeze the water from her hair. Her retreat is watched by every man with an intensity I don't think I've ever witnessed from a whole group before.

"I can't believe you guys are talking about food. All I want to eat is walking away right now," Jimmy mutters. "People around her need to get their priorities straight."

"I hear you, brother," Theron says, turning to me. "So, you got an idea?"

"We draw straws. Ten straws cut from short to long. Longest goes first, then in order until the shortest."

"Seems easy," Stefan says.

"Seems fucking mercenary," Russell grumbles.

"Allie asked for this, dude. But you don't need to be a part of it if you don't want to be. Just make sure you explain to her

why you're not interested."

He rubs his chin, eyes shadowed by his cap. "She deserves more," he says.

"More than what we can give?" I ask. "Doesn't sound like you have much faith in our abilities to please her!"

"I mean love," he says. "She deserves to be with someone who loves her and knows her value. Someone who'll treat her like the princess she is."

"I plan on treating her like a queen," I say. "And I'm sure every other man has the same aim."

"Unless she wants something different," Theron says. "This is about her fantasies. I say we make it clear that she can ask for whatever she wants from us."

"Exactly," I say.

Gabe stretches his arms above his head, cracking his back and neck. "This is going to end with hurt feelings. I'd put good money on it."

Tom and Russell both murmur their agreement.

"Why do you say that?" I ask. "Allie's a big girl. She's made her choice...it's empowerment."

"Except she's going to get confused, and she's bound to catch feelings for some of us, and maybe we'll catch feelings for her. That's what happens with sex."

I wish I could say I knew what he was talking about, but I don't. Not really. I've been with lots of women, and enjoyed most of those experiences just fine, but sex has never been

something emotional for me. It's always just been about giving and taking a physical release.

"We're all adults, aren't we?" Stefan shrugs like he's not worried about any of that.

Oliver shakes his head. "This is a bad idea."

"So, you're out?" Theron asks quickly, like he wants to show Oliver isn't being genuine.

Oliver slicks his tongue over his teeth, looking down to conceal the frustration that's completely obvious. "I didn't say that."

Forget Allie being torn. Oliver is practically tearing himself in two.

"We should go back to the house and deal with this," I say, glancing down at my fingers. "I'm turning into a prune here."

No one seems to need convincing, and I lead the way back across the sand, finding my slides and carrying them toward the house. Music plays from inside: something jazzy and soft that fits with Allie. Clay makes himself a coffee and a few of the others follow suit, filling the kitchen with the scent of bitter roasted beans and creamy milk. I hunt in the drawers and cupboards for something suitable to make straws. There isn't anything like that, but I find some string and a pair of kitchen scissors.

When I start cutting lengths, Jimmy watches across the island with Theron and Gabe.

"I still can't believe Allie's accepted this idea," Gabe says.



“She could still change her mind.” Theron braces his big, work-roughened hands on the counter like the idea is too much for him to take. I know what he means. Now she’s said yes, hearing no would sting. It’s still her prerogative, though. At any point.

I just hope the men who go first really think about how they treat her and what kind of experiences they give her so that they don’t fuck it up for the ones going later.

When I have a bundle of different length strings, I put them into my fist with the ends protruding all roughly the same length. Their true size remains concealed.

“Alright, guys. Time to pick.”

“How do we decide who gets to pick first?” Theron eyes the strings like there’s a conspiracy against him.

“Just pick a fucking string,” Oliver grumbles. “Let’s get this ridiculous task over.”

Theron gives him an annoyed side-eyed glare but picks a string. Gabe is next. Then Jimmy. Carson, Clay, Tom and Stefan follow. Russell and Oliver are last, drawing strings with pained expressions and I bite my lip against telling them they need to decide one way or another. If they’re in, they’re in. If they don’t like it, they should just butt out. Having them grudgingly involved isn’t going to be good for anyone.

The string that’s left behind is mine, and that’s fine. I’m a big believer in fate. Whatever will be will be. The men stand around me, holding strings, trying to work out who’s got the best one. There’s not an obvious difference, so it takes a while for everyone to work out where they stand in the lineup.

Stefan whoops when he realizes he's got the longest string. As it turns out, Russell has the shortest, which is a big relief. The rest of us work out our numbers and then the strings are tossed into the trash.

"Who's going to tell Allie the order?" Oliver pushes his hand through his hair, leaving finger-lines of stress.

"I think it's best if we don't," I say. "Less weird anticipation that way. We just tell her who's next when it's the right time."

"You mean, after each of us is done?" Trust Theron to make it sound like we're embarking on something unpleasant that involves work.

"When each of us has given Allie an awesome experience," Tom says, as though he read my mind.

Oliver turns away from the group and makes his way upstairs. Theron's eyes follow, suspiciously. "You don't think he's going up there to tell her she needs to change her mind?"

Stefan places his empty cup into the sink. "He won't do that," he says with certainty. "He might not be sure about this, but he believes in free will. Allie gets to make her own decision."

"Treat her good," Theron says. "You're like the warm-up, dude. The fluffer. Don't wreck this with any weird, kinky shit."

"What makes you think I'm kinky?" Stefan grins.

"Dudes your age have done it all. You need to add some weird shit to your repertoire just to get off."

Stefan snorts with laughter. "I'm not that much older than you, *dude*."

“Old enough.”

“So, what’s the deal with this? Are we all keeping what we do to ourselves or is everything up for discussion? I mean, I’m not usually a kiss and tell kind of guy. What happens in the bedroom stays the bedroom and all that, but this isn’t exactly a standard situation. You guys know more about my dick than any other man ever has. And this whole thing is about sharing.”

“I guess we should leave that part up to Allie. She’s going to be there for it all, so it’s not like we need to discuss it in the open unless she wants us to.”

“Maybe we should compare notes, though. You know...aim to make it the best for her it can be.” Stefan scans the group for responses, and receives a mixture of nods, shrugs and grimaces. It kind of blows my mind how different the men’s attitudes are, even though we all signed up for this assignment.

“Let’s see what Allie says and how you get on.”

“Oh, I’ll get on just fine. Don’t you worry.” Stefan stands straight, puffing out this chest and we all laugh.

“I can see this turning into some kind of weird fucking contest,” Gabe says, rubbing his thick beard.

I dump my string on the counter and stretch my arms above my head, craving to run even more now. “I’m going to go grab my sneakers,” I say. “Then I’m hitting the sand if anyone wants to join me. But first, I’m going to update Allie, okay?”

A murmur of approval follows me up the stairs. The music from Allie’s room spills through her open door and into the

hallway. When I knock, she tells me to come in and turns the music down immediately. I let the door swing open and stand in the doorway, bracing one arm against the jamb.

She's sitting at the desk, computer open, hair tied into a messy bun and bikini swapped for a cute hot pink tank and shorts set. She has a pen through her hair, holding it in place, and a pair of the cutest librarian glasses I've ever seen. "Jonas?"

"Yeah. We're all set. I just wanted to let you know. Stefan's your first..." I pause, racking my brain for the right word. "Candidate."

"Oh, okay. Thanks for letting me know." When her eyebrows raise and her lips part, I can't work out how she's feeling.

"This still what you want?" I ask, needing to make sure before I leave the house that everything is in order.

"Yeah," she says. I expect her eyes to lower, but she holds my gaze, and that confidence is what makes me sure.

"I'll see you later, then. I'm going for a run."

She smiles, her pretty eyes lighting up like fire embers. "See you later."

I glance at her still rumpled bed and my cock vibrator, which rests apart from the others on her nightstand. I'd pay good money to see her play with it again. Maybe that could be part of our time together. Maybe she'd enjoy that too.

Her gaze follows mine and then she pushes her thighs together like she remembers and damn if that isn't the sexist thing I've seen in a long time.

“Soon,” I say, leaning into the room enough to make my muscles bulge against my own weight. “Soon you’ll get to see if the real thing is better than the replica.”

“Get out of here, Jonas,” she laughs, blushing profusely.

And I do, strolling down the hallway with a whole lot of swagger.

After my run, I head to the kitchen and down a bottle full of room temperature water. I’m sweating and out of breath but still buzzing with energy. Outside, there’s a weird tension bubbling between everyone. A sense of anticipation that’s stifling conversation and causes people to keep looking at their watches.

I think we all need something to do to keep our minds from running too wild. I root around in the cupboards outside and find a volleyball net and ball.

“Anyone wanna play beach volleyball?” I ask.

To my surprise, every man nods, some rising immediately from sunbeds, ready to join in.

Setting up the court doesn’t take long, and we manage to divide ourselves into teams without any awkward high school picking. There’s no runt in this litter and it’s impossible to tell who’s going to be skilled at this game without seeing the action.

Me and Jimmy end up on opposite sides, so do Carson and Clay, and Oliver and Stefan. Theron and Gabe initially stand together but part when they notice a trend. Russell drifts

away from Theron, and Tom agreeably drifts to the team lacking a final team member.

And we play.

With ten men involved, I expect it to get ridiculously competitive. We don't know each other well yet, and there's a lot to prove.

But there is such a mix of different characters in the group, and that seems to keep the game friendly. It wasn't like this when I played sports when I was a kid. There would always be someone who had something to prove, or demons to work out of their system.

And while we play, I forget to be the funny one. I don't feel the need to crack jokes or find the humor in other people's mistakes. I just relax into a moment in time and connect with nine other dudes who seem like they all have the potential to become good friends.



# ALLIE

Stefan's first.

I don't know how to feel about it. In a way, I'm relieved it's someone I'm assuming has a lot of experience. I'm pushing myself so outside of my comfort zone that I need someone who's going to be good at the training-wheels version of everything!

I need a man who's going to hold my hand and teach me what to do and how it's supposed to feel.

Stefan will be good at that.

He has that sexy older man vibe going on in spades.

But I can't spend too much time dwelling because I have work to do on the first part of the article that sets the scene. And I want to get it written as soon as possible so that it isn't clouded by what happens next. It's important to capture first impressions and my early thoughts about the subject, and writing while it's all fresh will make for a more marked transformation through the piece.

The trouble is, I can't concentrate.

My mind is a scramble of anticipation mixed with trepidation.

My attention keeps drifting to the vibrator I know is Stefan's. I couldn't stop myself from looking. It feels like preparation to know in advance what I'm going to be getting.



The big question is, how far I'm going to go with him? Will he be my first? Will he expect that and will I feel comfortable enough to go that far?

I think through all the men downstairs and imagine what each would be like, knowing they were my first. It's impossible to pick between them even though they're so different.

This must be what Dawn and Kyla felt like. So many men, like a smorgasbord of opportunity, and no way to select a preference.

I'm part way into my work, and around two hours have passed, when there's a gentle tap on the door, I almost jump out of my skin. As it's ajar, Stefan sees my reaction and holds his hands out, palms facing me. "Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you."

He's so striking that it would be impossible for any woman not to do a double-take, but it's his charming smile and golden-tinged green eyes that totally disarm me.

I stand, smoothing my hands over my shorts, conscious of the heat that's prickling my skin. My internal voice whispers to tell him I'm working. It's too soon. I'm not prepared. But the truth is I don't think I'm ever going to be truly ready. "It's okay. Come in. Close the door." My heart hammers a frantic drumbeat against the cage of my ribs, as though it's desperate to escape.

When Stefan takes a step into my room and pushes the door firmly shut, I instinctively take a step back. "Shall I lock it too?"

“Definitely.” I smile nervously and take another step back. With Stefan in the room, it suddenly feels so much smaller. He isn’t an overwhelmingly large man, but his lean broadness and height make me feel tiny and insubstantial. That and the reason he’s here.

“I can feel your nerves from here.” He tips his head to one side and peruses me. “I get why you feel that way. This is a weird situation and my first time with a woman I haven’t kissed or at least seduced.”

“The first time you’ve been in a situation with a woman who knows what your cock looks like when you haven’t got it out yet?”

He grins at my attempt to break the tension; the expression crinkling his eyes and making them seem soft and kind.

“Yeah. That’s the weirdest part.” He takes a step forward, and then another, carefully as though he’s conscious that a sudden move will startle me. I hold my ground, even though I feel like backing against the wall, pressing myself against the cool plaster, watching him move with trepidation pulsing in every cell of my body.

“It’s a weird situation,” he says, his voice taking on a low gravelly quality that makes the back of my neck feel fizzy. “But I’ll make it good for you, Allie. If it’s what you want? You can relax. I’ll lead the way.”

When he’s close enough to touch me, his eyes drop to my lips. He traps his bottom lip between his teeth, a moment of restraint and consideration before he moves to the next step. “It is what you want?”

My voice feels trapped within the tightness of my throat, so I nod, eyes wide with anticipation. I want to kiss him. I want to know what those lips will feel like against mine. But kissing is intimate. Isn't that why it's said sex workers reserve it for their lovers? Will Stefan even want to do that with me?

The answer comes quicker than I expect. First, he slides his thumb across my bottom lip, testing its plump softness. Then he dips down, and I let my eyelids fall, needing the dark safety behind them, wanting the anticipation that not quite knowing what's coming next will bring.

Our first kiss is like the slow drip of honey from a fresh comb, sweet and languid. Stefan explores my mouth, his hands cradling my nape and gently gripping the sides of my throat. When I moan, he goes deeper, sliding his tongue over mine so perfectly that my knees go weak.

So this is what my friends used to speak about. Kisses that make your head feel like a helium balloon with its strings cut. Kisses that turn knees to jello. Stefan takes his time, building my trust with his gentle touch, easing his hand from my neck and letting his fingers trace my collarbone and lower until his hands are at my waist.

"Are you sure this is what you want?" he asks again.

"I don't know what I want," I whisper. "That's always been my problem."

He smiles, kissing the corner of my mouth, and the relief I feel that there's no frustration at my words, and no anger, burns my throat.

“So, we take it slow. And if you decide at any point that you want to stop, you just need to tell me. I’m going to ask you what feels good, and I want you to be honest. No fake moans. No fake enthusiasm. I want to learn to read you. I want you to come to know yourself and the things you like. The only way I can do that is if you teach me what you like as we go.”

“Okay,” I squeak, as Stefan touches my waist, his hand pushing at the fabric of my top, easing it up to reveal more and more skin.

“I’m going to take this off.”

I don’t object when he takes hold of the hem on both sides and draws it up and over my head. He’s seen me in a bikini and my bra isn’t that much more revealing except the way his eyes darken at my nudity is something new.

“Take off your bra.”

It’s a front fastener, so there’s no slow reveal. It just parts easily, revealing everything. Stefan folds his lips in, and when they’re released, they’re glossy and even more kissable.

“Can I touch you?” he asks, his hand already twitching at his side.

“Yes.” It’s a breathy whisper, a voice that doesn’t sound like mine.

I expect him to pinch and squeeze the way my other boyfriends have. That kind of touch has never done anything for me. I’ve never understood how easily men approach such a soft part of a woman’s body with a hard touch.

Stefan’s different, though. His fingers trail as light as a feather across my skin. When he weighs my breast in his

palm, it's with soft reverence. When he circles my nipple, it's as though he's stirring his finger through water. I close my eyes and relax into the tingly feeling as nerve endings that have been long dormant come alive.

“So pretty,” he murmurs. “Do you even realize how pretty you are?”

I swallow against the unexpected lump wedged in my throat. The tiny shake of my head is instinct and he tsks. I open my eyes and find him licking his index finger. “So pretty,” he whispers again, trailing the wetness around my nipple, the air cooling against the moisture and drawing it tight.

I expect Stefan to want to move on, to strip me of the rest of my clothes and race to the finish line, but he's like a man presented with a tiny portion of Michelin starred cuisine that he intends to savor with slow, deliberate appreciation. I become like liquid beneath his soft touch. Dark swirling liquid that craves to be explored.

My hands reach out for his skin, pushing at his unbuttoned white linen shirt until it falls to the floor, finding his forearms hot and firm, and his biceps strong and sinewy. He's a man who has dedicated time and energy to his physique. A man in tune with his own body. But can he be in tune with mine?

I'm the one who hooks my fingers into the waistband of my shorts and tugs them down over my hips, letting the fabric pool around my ankles. I leave the last piece of my clothing to Stefan, shuddering as he slides a finger into the top of my lacy panties and teases the skin there. Oh god. I don't know how I'm supposed to act. I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

What's he expecting from me? An innocent virgin, quivering at every touch? Or a woman on a mission to explore?

How am I supposed to make this good for him?

I'm lost in my head, thinking about the next nine men who are going to follow this and the work it's going to take me to get through each experience.

"Allie," Stefan whispers, making me jump. "Where did you go?" He tips my chin, forcing me to look at him. Determined emerald eyes search mine, but I don't know what he sees. Fear? Uncertainty? My worry that I'm just not enough?

"I'm here," I say.

"You are now. You want to tell me what you're thinking?"

I don't, but finding a way to cover all my uncertainty with a believable excuse is just too difficult. "I...I don't know how to relax into this. I don't know how to make it good for me or for you."

"It's not your job to make it good for me or for you. We're here to make it good for each other...it's a joint effort, but today, it's on me." Stefan reaches out to touch my hair, and gently strokes my cheek and I melt a little inside at his tenderness.

It feels good to be touched this way, but it isn't about love. It's not about affection. It's just about physical pleasure and learning for the article. I have to remember that and keep these men and myself on track.

"You're still partially dressed." I scan from his neck down to his knees, appreciating the way his linen shorts cling to his

muscular thighs. I focus on his physical appearance and not how safe and appreciated he's making me feel.

"Ladies first in all things," he says, the perfect gentleman. "I want you to get on the bed and relax. We'll take it one step at a time." His fingers lace through mine, and he leads me like a debutant at a ball to the bed I scrambled to make neat. I take a seat awkwardly at the edge of the mattress, but he quickly scoops beneath my legs and swings me into the center, climbing onto the bed, too.

We're really doing this. I'm really going to find out what it feels like to be with a man.

"Just remember, we can stop at any time. Just say the word."

I nod, and he does what I've been desperate for him to do since he came into the room. He draws my panties over my hips, then takes hold of my ankles and plants my feet wide enough apart for him to access my most private place.

"Has anyone ever made you come before?" He leans forward, placing his palms against the sensitive skin on the inside of my thighs. I flush as bright as the sun as he eases my legs open even further, spreading my already slick pussy.

I shake my head, feeling shame even though I'm not at fault. Maybe I am for not being demanding enough. For failing to give good enough directions. Or for being too physically repressed to let go when my exes tried to use their fingers and tongues to bring me to orgasm. Or maybe they were just lazy lovers who, once they found out I wasn't an easy lay, just gave up.

“I’m going to lick you.” He’s already leaning in when he says it and I have to close my eyes to lock myself away from the embarrassment of this moment. Does anyone ever get used to having someone so close to this part of their body? How?

The first swipe of his tongue is tentative, exploratory. The tip circles my clit, nudging it until it tingles and swells, then slides lower, probing my entrance, making my hips buck.

Nothing has ever felt this good. Not my own furtive fingers or any of my ex’s pathetic attempts.

When my legs snap closed against Stefan’s head, he murmurs his approval, never letting up on the pace of his caresses, never changing tempo. And it’s his relentlessness, his considered focus, that takes me closer and closer and closer until he finally pushes me over the edge. Bright, sparking flashes of light assault me, and my body arches under his touch. My heart races triple time, and I make a noise that sounds strange and animalistic. At the start of my orgasm, Stefan pulls back, knowing that everything is too sensitive in that moment, but after, when I can breathe again, he rests the heel of his hand over my pussy, pressing just a little, making all the warm pleasure between my legs last longer.

“That’s it.” He sounds pleased with himself, and he should be. He just proved that I’m not broken and showed me how okay it is to lie back and have pleasure delivered so unselfishly. He made me so wet I can feel my arousal cooling between the cheeks of my ass.

My top lip is stuck to my teeth, so I use my tongue to free it, words blinking into my brain and disappearing just as fast. I



want to say thank you. I want to tell him how much it means to me to have experienced this, to know a man who's been around the block enough times that he doesn't require me to tell him what to do but can read me like braille.

But saying thank you for an orgasm seems pathetic.

When I open my eyes fully, I find my gaze fixed on the bar of his cock beneath the fabric of his shorts. It looks painfully confined and desperate to be unleashed.

His smile is radiant, and his eyes are bright with satisfaction and achievement. I wish I could give him a frigging gold star for effort.

"That was..." When I trail off, his grin grows wider.

"It was. What do you want to happen now?"

What do I want?

Everything. Nothing. For someone else to make decisions for me. To have zero responsibility.

Adulting isn't fun. It's annoying, and it takes far too much brain power and emotional investment.

But admitting that feels like letting Stefan read my diary. Funny that letting him lick my pussy is easier than being truthful about how I feel about life.

When I don't answer, his eyes drift to the nightstand, taking in the forest of lurid dildo's.

"If you're nervous about penetrative sex, I could use my vibrator on you. When you get more comfortable with penetration, you might feel more ready to move to the next level?"

I turn my head to where he's looking, remembering how it felt to use one on myself last night. I know my body can accommodate it, so what would be the use in trying that again?

It would be the easy option. The cowardly option. And I don't want to be a coward today.

"I'm ready to move to the next level," I say, and to illustrate the point, I reach out and begin to unbutton Stefan's shorts.

The look he shoots me is blazing, and he catches my wrist in a fierce grip.

"You're sure?" he asks.

I want to scream at him to just do it, but I keep the frantic and feral part of me to myself and reply with a simple nod. Then I wrap my hand around the first ten-inch cock I've ever come close to, and finally get to feel what all the fuss is about.



## STEFAN

The feel of Allie's cool, eager hand around my dick is indescribably arousing. The way her jaw drops after she realizes her fingers won't meet around my girth takes my breath away. If I don't rein myself in, I'm going to burst all over her hands and this whole thing will become the disappointment of the century. I mean, sex hasn't been this pressured for me for nearly twenty-five years. The expectation Allie must be feeling right now is humbling.

Her eagerness is so sweet, I can hardly take it.

Everything about this moment is so different from my last entanglement with a woman. Oliver warned me Corinne was a gold digger, but I didn't see it until after I gave her an engagement ring. It took me a while to remove her claws, and once I was free, I vowed never to be so blind again. I vowed never to compromise on love because of my desire to move on to a different stage in my life.

I ease my shorts down, shifting to give her more access. Her eyes go so wide, I almost burst out laughing, but I manage to rein that in too. I don't want to make her feel stupid because she's inexperienced. I'm numero uno in this strange arrangement and that's a lot of weight resting on my shoulders.

It's been a long time since I was with anyone as young as Allie. Well, at least nine years. The age difference between us

adds another layer to her innocence and inexperience that fills me with a huge sense of responsibility.

“It’s so big,” she says with eyes as wide as saucers.

“That’s the reason I’m here,” I remind her.

“I don’t think it’s going to fit.” She glances between her legs, trying to work out the logistics.

“Don’t worry about that. If you’re wet, it’s going in.”

Her tongue darts out to moisten her lips and for a second, I think she’s going to try and blow me. There’s no way I’d be able to hold myself together through a blow job with this girl. If I have a chance of making this good for her, I’m going to need to think of the most boring things - work meetings, politics, and my uncle’s Thanksgiving lunch conversation - until I’ve sent her into the stratosphere. Only then will I be able to let go.

Not wanting to waste any more time, I push my shorts down. Allie’s eyes search my body, and her hand squeezes a little tighter as a result.

“You’re in really good shape.”

That’s exactly the kind of thing every man wants to hear. If I was younger, my ego would have swelled to epic proportions. Right now, I just appreciate that the work I put in has been noticed.

“So are you.”

Allie quirks an eyebrow. “I don’t have time to work out,” she says. “My boss keeps me too busy, but I wish I did.”

“Your body is perfect just the way it is.”

“Perfect.” Her snort tells me she doesn’t believe me but if she could see inside the minds of every man in this house, she’d realize just how perfect she is. A long time ago, I noticed that women are way more judgmental of each other than men ever are of women.

I pull a condom out of my pocket and tear it open with my teeth. “You want to put it on?”

She shakes her head quickly. “I don’t know how.”

“I’ll show you. Here.” Reaching for her hand, I place the condom over the head of my cock and squeeze her fingers around the curled rim, placing enough pressure that when I push down, the condom unfurls.

“That doesn’t hurt?” Her expression is horrified, but I just shrug.

“Dicks are a lot more robust than you’d think. At least, mine is!”

“Okay.”

When the rubber is fully in place, Allie shifts back, then lies down and bites her lip.

“You look scared.” I climb over her so that I can interrupt her fierce eye contact with the ceiling.

“I just...” Her lip is attacked by her teeth again.

I bend and press a soft kiss at the corner of her mouth, and then on the edge of her jaw. More soft kisses on her hairline, and on the shell of her ear. “Don’t think,” I say. “Just feel. Be in the moment with me.”

I take one of her hands and link our fingers. I kiss her neck and lower, sucking each sweet nipple before nuzzling the valley between her breasts. She smells like soap and sunshine, like early morning dew and evening jasmine, and I inhale deeply against her skin, savoring her scent and her warmth, relishing the flutter of her heart beneath my cheek. I kiss lower, using the tip of my tongue to circle her navel, blowing a cool breath against her clit. She shudders and her hips shift and it's only when I can see that she's primed and ready that I settle into the cradle of her thighs and let my cock drop to notch at her entrance.

Her grip on my hand is fierce, and her previously pliant body stiffens with anticipation.

"Do you trust me?" I ask, holding back, even though the urge to thrust into her sweet pussy is making my abs clench.

"Yes."

That's the word I needed to hear. The pressure I put behind my cock is enough to breach her entrance, but only a little. I hold my breath, the magnitude of this moment for Allie like a boot to my gut. I brace over her, feeling the clench of her thighs, and wait for her to relax. Her wide eyes flutter shut at the stretch and her free hand rests on my hip.

This moment is everything. For her and for me. She's giving me the gift of something precious, something she only gets to give once in her life. I'm not worthy of it. Not really. I should have encouraged her to wait for a man who loves her deeply.

But I also have to respect her reasons for wanting this and I know I can give her a great first time. That's guaranteed. We

haven't known each other for long, but in that short time, I've come to care for Allie. I only want to bring her happiness.

Her fingers on my hip exert just a little pressure against my skin, urging me forward, whether purposeful or not. Jesus, she's tight. Tight and wet and warm as apple pie.

I push forward some more, letting my weight do the work, relishing her body accommodating mine. There's something so unbelievably primal about this moment. A claiming, a feeling of ownership. The caveman in me is usually dormant, but he comes roaring out of the darkness and suddenly I can't hold back anymore. I need to be deep inside Allie. I need to fill her body until I'm buried to the root, and she's begging me to move.

And that's what happens. As soon as my body presses onto her clit she gasps, "please," and it's music to my ears.

I've done it. I've taken her virginity. I've broken something that can't ever be mended, and now I have to make the decision that brought us here something that Allie won't regret. I need to make it worthwhile for her. I move, slowly at first, grinding into her sweet, wet heat, nudging one of her legs higher on my hip so I can get even deeper. And I can. Shit. It's like her body was made for mine. I push in so deep I anticipate she'll wince, but she doesn't. She takes all of me, the full ten inches.

She's perfect.

"Oh god," she moans. "Oh..."

I kiss whatever she was going to add right off the tip of her tongue and it's total bliss. We lose ourselves in each other,



until we're sweat-slicked and panting, until Allie's eyes are wide, and her hand is grasping at me with frenzied fervor.

I've never been able to lose myself in someone this way. I've never been able to fuck without holding back an inch or two or three, and I suddenly realize what I've been missing.

"Don't stop." Her body arches, searching, and I keep the tempo nice and steady as her pussy clamps down around my cock in wave after wave of pure release. The satisfaction I feel in giving her an orgasm is magnified by the fact that I know it's her first time. She'll remember this forever and it'll set her up to have the right expectations going forward. I fuck her through her pleasure, making sure it lasts for as long as it possibly can. Then, and only then, do I allow myself to finish. And fuck, what a finish it is.

It's been years since I've climaxed so intensely. I see stars and colors like the northern lights. My body seizes, rooting deep inside Allie's body as I spill every last drop and she clings to me, drawing me down until my weight is fully rested over her and my face buried in her neck and hair. Her fingers dance over the skin of my back as I breathe hard and, after both of us have settled, she starts to laugh.

It starts as a light bubble and develops into something bigger and brighter, and I push up onto my arms and gaze down at her, perplexed.

"Women don't usually descend into fits of giggles after I fuck them."

She reaches out and touches my cheek, still smiling like she just hit the jackpot.

“That was so, so, so awesome,” she says, and it’s like a shadow has lifted from her face and all that is left is pure happiness.

“It was awesome,” I tell her, as her happiness draws up inside me too. The purity of appreciation is something that touches me deeply. Too many people get up and walk away from an experience like this with a shrug. But not Allie. She breathes it in and holds it tightly like a candle burning brightly. I kiss her lips because how can I not? She tastes like the first day of summer, and Christmas morning cookies, all rolled into one.

Conscious that I might be crushing her, I reach between us to pinch the condom, and shift so we’re both lying on our sides. I stroke the hair from her face and brush the apple of her cheek with my thumb. I think about all the times I’ve done this with other women and no first sex has ever felt this meaningful.

“Thank you,” she whispers, resting her hand over my wrist. “Thank you for making this so...” Her voice trails away, the words for what this has been too hard to find.

I’m an ad guy. Words have always been my thing. Allie’s a journalist. Words are her bread and butter, too.

But sometimes experiences are impossible to condense into tiny letters. Sometimes there are no words.

So instead of trying to define what this was and is, I kiss the girl in front of me, and everything feels just right.



## ALLIE

I'm not a virgin anymore.

Even the thought sounds weird in my head.

I'm not a virgin and I've finally experienced the kind of sex I've heard others gush about. The kind of sex that women write about in romance novels and is featured in films. Epic orgasmic sex that doesn't come with baggage or expectation, and I got to experience it with a man who made me feel so good about everything.

It wasn't part of the agreement, but after the sex, Stefan stayed with me, hugging and kissing. The aftercare was as awesome as the sex and has left me with a grin that's threatening to obliterate my face.

When Stefan left to shower, I took a chance to freshen up. The unfamiliar sensation between my legs is going to take some getting used to. I can still feel Stefan inside me. It's as though my body has stretched to accommodate him and now it's taking a while to revert.

I didn't bleed, but I didn't expect to. The whole blood on the sheets thing would have just been awkward, so it's a big relief.

I was expecting it to hurt but it didn't. After all the stories they told me, I expected to struggle to accept the full length of him, but I didn't. Is that weird? Do I have an unusually long vagina?

In the mirror, I look for differences in my face, but I don't find any. Such a big thing has happened, but there is no evidence that I've changed in the slightest.

Before I go downstairs to face the hordes, I reply to a message from Kirsty, who's asking me for an update. *It's going well*, I tell her. *The extended interview format is providing me with some rich insight.*

Rich insight is right.

When I've sent the email, I exhale. Everything I said is true, but it's far from the truth. What I did with Stefan is beyond the realms of professionalism, but it has helped me grasp some of what the men have been talking about. Getting up close and personal with ten inches of quality dick has made me really appreciate the truth behind the size discussion. A man of that size can reach places other men can't reach. His dick was like a catapult to heaven. A baseball bat capable of hitting a home run every time!

I procrastinate over going downstairs because facing the other nine men in this house when they know what's happened isn't something I relish. But when Stefan knocks to tell me it's time for a late lunch, I can't put it off any longer.

Time to face the music.

And find out who's next.

I know the outfit I've chosen to wear is a little more provocative than I'd usually select for lunch. The teal halter-dress is clingy and short, finishing halfway up my thighs. But now I'm deep into this arrangement, my body feels ripe and sexy and worthy of display. I want to sense the lingering looks

and appreciative gazes. I want the men who've yet to show me the value of ten inches to be eager for the opportunity to reveal exactly what I've been missing.

When I descend the stairs, I find ten men sitting around the table, heaping food onto their plates. It smells delicious, and I can tell from the rumble of chatter and laughter that they're hungry. But as soon as one man turns to me, the attention of every single man at the table diverts from food and pivots in my direction.

"There she is." Theron steps out from his chair and makes his way closer, reaching to take my hand to lead me to the table. When I'm in my place at the head of the table, he bends to kiss my knuckles and I have to fight back a smile. Theron is many things, but old school gentleman wasn't top of my list of descriptors.

"You look different, Allie." Jonas is sitting to my right, and he rubs his chin as he studies me. "You look relaxed."

"I am," I say. "I'm also hungry."

I find Stefan further down the table and blush when he winks. Forget food. I could take him back upstairs for something way more satisfying.

I reach out to serve myself a good portion of food, ravenous after the sex. A rumbling stomach isn't sexy, but it's a fine balance. I don't want to be bloated from eating too much. There's nothing sexy about a big, uncomfortably full belly!

The group is unusually quiet, and I frown and chew on my lip, wondering if they're waiting for me to say something. Are they expecting me to share my thoughts on the experience? I

guess they might be. After all, that's what has been expected of them since they arrived.

I take a bite, savoring the flavor and taking the opportunity to think about how I should play things. In the interests of the article, I need everyone to remain as open as possible. Nothing that happens under this roof should be a secret. Asking each of the men to keep selective secrets will only stifle honesty across the board. As much as it's awkward to discuss my sex life openly, it's the only way to ensure I can write something that will meet Kirsty's brief.

"So, I guess Stefan filled you all in?" I raise my brows and tip my head to the side, waiting for a response.

"Stefan's a gentleman." It's sweet that Oliver steps in to defend his friend so quickly.

When I meet Stefan's gaze, he nods once to affirm he has indeed kept our interaction to himself.

"That's sweet," I say. "But not necessary. We're here to discuss things openly and that has to include anything that happens under this roof."

"Thank the lord." Jimmy stands, shoving his chair back with his legs and resting his palms flat on the table. He's sitting directly opposite Stefan so he can stare him down, expectantly. "Spill the beans, dude."

"Why don't we let Allie talk about her experience?" Theron says. "I'd like to hear her perspective. How was your first experience of sex, and do you think Stefan's size had a positive or a negative impact?"

“I think we should swap places and you should write the article,” I laugh. Theron nods, happy to be complimented. “The experience was amazing,” I add quickly. “Stefan is a great lover and his size definitely had a positive impact.”

“And do you think that it’s size or how he used it?” Theron asks.

Jimmy, who has taken his seat again, nudges Theron. “Why? You worried you won’t be able to live up to Stefan?”

“No.”

There’s a rumble of laughter in the group as Theron puffs out his chest defiantly.

“It’s not a competition.” I take another bite of food and chew around my smile. Of course it’s a competition. These are men and we’re talking about sex. As if it could be about anything else. The thought that there are currently nine men worrying about how they’re going to make sex with me explosive has a heat aching between my legs and a smile dancing on my lips.

“Who’s next?” Stefan asks, waving his fork around the group. There’s no smugness about him because he knows who he is and what he’s capable of. The extra years he has on some of the men here give him maturity, which is so sexy.

“Me.” Carson leans back in his chair and stretches his arms over his head. “Although, I’m not sure Allie will be ready for me anytime soon.”

“Oh, I’m ready.” Competitive Allie raises her head before the rest of me has a chance to assess the sense in what I’m saying. Could I really take Carson so soon after Stefan? I can



still feel the echo of him inside me. Does that mean I'm sore? Should I insist on waiting until tomorrow?

I do the math, and there are nine more men and only five more days. Two a day, at least. Or more if I want to get through them all and have time to formulate more questions for the article.

*A true journalist*, my internal voice whispers with a deep sarcasm. I can pretend all I like that I'm in this proposal for investigative purposes, but the truth is it's all about personal exploration and the desire for pleasure.

If I can have some of what Dawn has within this contained environment, and walk away a changed woman at the end, everything will be better. I can go back to my job and deal with the lack of work satisfaction because I'll know satisfaction in my sex life.

Yes, there will still be things missing. Emotional stability. Love, even.

But I'm a big believer in dealing with one thing at a time.

Compartmentalization is king.

A rumble of approval meets my confident assertion, and Clay slaps his friend on the back like a best man congratulating the groom at a wedding. The honeymoon is imminent. Except it's nothing romantic.

A shiver of anticipation sets the hairs on my arms raising. Carson is gorgeous. When his piercing blue eyes meet mine, they're so intense I have to look away. Just the thought of seeing him naked is enough to ruin my panties. All that ink covering his body, the fierce expressions of gods and heroes

long discarded and dead, cling to his aura. Outward appearances make Carson seem more dangerous. His height. His sheer bulk.

But there's also a creativity about him, present in his art and his interest in ancient history.

And a vulnerability, too.

"Eat up," Clay says.

Carson reaches out and grabs his beer, taking a long drink, his throat moving thirstily, and there's something about the action that makes me wonder if he's nervous. I guess it's natural, even with experience. I'm someone new. Someone he doesn't know that well.

And there are nine other men waiting to hear about how he does.

I'm glad Stefan was first because he was confident and experienced. He handled me with the expertise of a man who's had years to become comfortable in his own skin. Now, with Carson, I feel like I'll have a part to play in settling his nerves.

"Give me a couple of hours," I say. "I want to have a swim. And I have more questions to ask."

"Business before pleasure." True words from Clay, but I don't feel guilty.

"The way it has to be."

Now that my next rendezvous has been determined, the group relaxes, and conversation turns to football and baseball. I get a chance to sit back and watch their interactions. It's fun

to witness their back and forth, fun to see them laugh without artifice. When they're not trying to prove something, they seem to get along so well, though I accept that Natalie's suggestion that they could become my harem could only ever be in my fantasies.

After, I clear the plates with Tom and Russell and the rest move to hang out in the sun. Watching seven gorgeous men apply sunscreen to their glistening skin is enough to make me drop a plate on the floor, and Russell's startled response gives me pause. Tom is quick to clear up the mess, using his hands at first, and then a broom to sweep up the smaller shards. Russell busies himself by packing leftovers in the fridge, but out of the corner of my eye, I witness him grasping the edge of the counter and drawing long deep breaths into his lungs. With white knuckles and a tense expression, I can feel the anxiety pulsing from him and my heart aches. I had a rescue dog when I was a kid. One who'd gone through trauma before finding his forever home with us. Russell reminds me of him a lot. They share the same watchfulness and jumpiness. The same quiet awareness, and the instinct to remain on the outside until they've gained enough trust and are encouraged in.

When the kitchen is spotless, I make my way outside to swim a few lengths before choosing a place in the shade. I interview Jonas and Jimmy about masturbation, and I find out a whole lot about their attitudes to self-pleasure. Both express that having a ten-inch cock makes masturbation harder. More surface area to cover. Longer strokes means more effort. Both acknowledge the size of their biceps and

laugh when I mention that their non-dominant arm is equally proportioned.

Throughout the whole conversation, I feel Carson watching me from behind his sunglasses. He's reclining on a sunbed, one arm resting behind his head. All that gloriously inked skin glistening in bright sunshine. He's tugged his swim shorts up around his thighs, revealing quads so defined, the sight of them makes my clit pulse.

Time ticks past and with every passing minute, I'm more antsy for my next experience, and Carson's gaze becomes more heated. When I'm close to melting into a pile of goo, I can't take it anymore. I stand abruptly, drawing the eyes of every man, and smooth down my dress with damp palms. A shiver runs over my clit and lower and my nipples harden in the confines of my bra. I'm primed and ready in a way I've never been before.

The power of anticipation.

I'll have to note the realization in my article.

"You're up, Carson," Jonas says with an expression so jubilant you'd think it was his turn.

Carson's slow to rise, his body moving languidly. My feet feel rooted to the ground, but I force myself to walk. I catch Stefan's eyes as I pass, and the intensity in his gaze is like a fist grip around my heart. Whistles erupt as Carson follows me into the house, the men becoming like frat boys encouraging their buddy to take the head cheerleader upstairs.

I want to trail behind Carson, to let him take the lead, but he hangs back and I end up climbing the stairs in front of him.

The sway of my hips feels exaggerated now that I know his eyes are on me. The heat of him and his intention is palpable. Those hands that create such spectacular images hang at his sides, but they won't be immobile for long. Soon those big artistic fingers will touch me. Soon they'll be taking me to places I've only imagined before Stefan.

When we get to the top of the stairs, he reaches out and rests his hand against my lower back. "Hey."

I turn and crane my neck. This close, he's so much taller than me. A wall of intense, tattooed man. "Hey." My voice sounds like a wisp.

His hand drifts to my upper arm. "Before we..." Carson's attention drifts to the door of my room. "I want to know what you want from this experience."

"Just you," I say. "Just do whatever you like."

His eyebrows raise, deepening lines across his forehead. "What if it's some fucked up shit?"

I can't imagine Carson being into anything deviant, but what do I know? I get why he's asking, but for all his good intentions, putting me on the spot like this is a problem. How do I explain that I want to know each of them? What makes them similar and what makes them different?

It sounds ridiculous in my own mind, and the idea of expressing it fills my chest with buzzing moths. I have to come up with some kind of analogy.

"You know...well...ice creams can have a lot of different flavors. That's what I want from this experience."

"You want to taste different flavors."

I nod. It's the best explanation I have expressed in the least embarrassing way I can think of.

"Okay." His hand grips my upper arm, and he walks me to my bedroom door with just a bite of force in his grip and movements.

Just enough to make the buzzing moths flutter like crazy.

When we're inside my room, I don't get a chance to relax. As Carson closes the door, he shoves me against the wall, his hand on my throat, his narrowed eyes fixed on my lips. "What flavor am I?" His voice is cold, as though the idea is something terrible.

I lick my lips nervously. "Dark chocolate." Just the bite of his fingers into my skin is enough to sense it. But that's not all there is to Carson. "With frozen strawberry pieces."

"Why the strawberry?"

"Because there's something bright and creative about you... something vivid."

"Vivid." He chews the word in his mouth, then kisses me hard. The press of his lips is so forceful compared to Stefan, the slide of his tongue into my mouth like an invasion. I moan, long and low as his hand slips into my nape and grips, taking full control of our movements. The thigh I was admiring by the pool is shoved hard between my legs, pressing against my clit in a way that aches so perfectly.

Oh fuck. I was right about dark chocolate.

His free hand slides up the back of my thigh, gripping my ass hard enough to bruise and I find myself rubbing against his leg like a bitch in heat, frantic for more contact. With no

warning, he lifts me with one arm, forcing my legs around his waist, carrying me to the bed. Kneeling on the edge of the mattress, he lowers me down, and looms over me, eyes blazing like blue flames. “Do you like it dark?”

I nod, half frightened, but mostly thrilled. Before I can respond, he flips me onto my front, and with a powerful arm beneath my belly, drags me up onto my hands and knees. He grips my hips and before I can adjust to the change in perspective, the heat of his mouth is pressed against my pussy, his tongue slipping beneath the fabric and entering me.

“Oh fuck,” I gasp, as he licks between my labia, flicking my clit. I fall to my elbows, and he slaps my ass once, so hard and fast it takes a few seconds for the pain and heat to bloom. “You like dark? Is this too dark for you?”

“No,” I whimper before my mind has a chance to catch up. I don’t recognize the sound of my own voice or the desire that spreads through me like liquid chocolate.

“Fuck.” His thumbs spread me open, and he licks deeper into me. I scramble to get away even as I want more. The pleasure is too much, too raw.

“Did he cum in you?” Carson asks.

“No.” I flush so hot at the question I’m grateful that he can’t see my face.

“Do you want me to use a condom?”

I grip the sheets beneath me as his tongue circles my taint while his thumb pushes into my pussy. “Yes,” I gasp.

Biting the cheek of my ass, he rests back on his haunches and searches for a condom in his pocket. With brutal

efficiency, he covers his cock. I don't watch, but listen, the sounds making a greater impact on my psyche than watching ever could.

As his cock juts into my entrance, his hand grasps my neck, forcing my forehead to the mattress. He forces inside me, the pressure intense, holding my body hostage. Where Stefan entered me with gentle purpose, Carson is intent on breaching my boundaries.

"Fuck, you're so tight."

I feel tight. The thickness of him seems impossible for my body to accept. It's a violation in the best possible way.

*You shouldn't like this.* Even as I flush with arousal, my body pressing back to force the full length of Carson inside me, a part of me feels shame. Wanting to be conquered and controlled by a man feels like something from a different century. I'm not that woman. At least, I'm not usually. Except now, I'm grunting into a mattress while my body is racked by the thrusts of a tattooed brute.

And it feels so good. Better than I could ever have predicted.

Another slap to my ass, makes my pussy squeeze tightly, and Carson calls out, the pleasure becoming too much.

"You feel so good, Allie. Too good. So deep. Too fucking sweet."

When he reaches beneath me to grasp my breast through my dress, I find myself yanked into an upright position, my back against this broad heaving chest. His thrusts are



relentless, his hand at my throat pure possession. Each stroke of his dick inside me makes me cry out.

“That’s it, baby,” he whispers darkly in my ear. “That’s it. Come on my cock. I want to feel you.”

He’s bossy and demanding but has the key to my arousal because I do. And it’s painfully good, like the tingle of ice cream across sensitive teeth before it settles against tastebuds. I gasp and he grips my hair, yanking my head back so he can twist my face to his. He kisses me while my body pulses around him, and when he’s about to let go, he holds his forehead against mine, closes his eyes and releases.

And it’s strange, because as I watch him orgasm, I think it’s the most peaceful I’ve ever seen him.



## CARSON

I've made a big mistake. I know as soon as it's over. I was too much for Allie. I showed her too much.

If I were a sensible man, I would have fucked her like we were making love. Missionary with lots of kisses and caresses. The kind of sex from cheesy romance movies that women love and men don't really understand. Instead, when she told me she wanted to taste all the flavors, I lost my head.

Who fucks an almost virgin the way I just did?

Who lets all their sick and twisted darkness spill out over the pristine whiteness of an innocent girl?

Me. That's who.

My dad's voice rumbles through my mind, a foul and ever-present force. *You're nothing. Just a stupid fucking kid who'll never make anything of your life.*

Well, I have. But even with my success, I can't seem to shrug off the gloom of his disapproval.

When I open my eyes, Allie is staring at me with her sweet, wide honey gaze that feels as warm as a hug. I blink as my cock begins to slide from inside her.

She told me I'm dark chocolate with strawberry filling. But I just feel dark, like I stole something from her rather than giving. Like I broke something that was perfect.

I drop my forehead to hers, breathing hard, and she twists in my arms and wraps herself around me like a koala on a eucalyptus tree. My heart is beating so fast that I can't think straight, so I go with instinct. I embrace her hard, kissing the top of her head, pressing her face into my inked chest. She comes face to face with the grim face of Perseus with the head of medusa in his hand but doesn't flinch.

"That was..."

"Too much." I stare at the wall behind her. Why can't I just be fucking normal? Why do I always have to push the boundaries?

"Perfect."

When I place both my palms on the side of her face, she looks up at me and smiles. My expression feels rigid, the shame forming a mask. She touches my brow, so gently it's like she's reached into my chest and stroked my heart.

"Did I hurt you?" I ask, scanning her body, that is still mostly concealed by the dress she wore for lunch. I was so hasty I didn't even undress her.

"No."

The ceiling is perfectly white and smooth, so different from the one I usually stare up at when I can't sleep. I blow out a relieved breath, but then feel like an idiot for believing Allie. She's such a nice woman. She'd say anything to make someone feel better.

I try to pull away, but she doesn't let me go. "Carson. I'm fine. Everything's fine. Everything's amazing, in fact."

“Amazing?” The word is such a stark contrast to what I had in my mind to describe what happened between us. I mean, it felt amazing to me, but that shouldn’t have been the first thing on my mind.

*Selfish.*

That was another word my dad used to use about me.

Allie strokes her hand across my scalp and rests her palm against the back of my neck. The warmth eases the tension there and I want to nuzzle into her affection. I want to bury my face in her belly and fall asleep while she runs her fingers over my face and neck. Shit, I want to relax with this girl and discover her secrets. I already know some. I googled her and read the article she wrote in college, which almost got her kicked out. She was fearless and eloquent. A bright light. I showed Clay, and he showed the rest. Now they all know what Allie’s really like behind all the restrained professionalism. I want to ask her why she’s doing what she’s doing instead of being out there, changing the world like she should be, but this isn’t the time or the place.

First, I need to take care of her.

“I need to use the bathroom,” I say, glancing at the open doorway.

“Oh. Sure.” Allie disentangles herself from me and shifts so her back is resting against the headboard. I cover my cock with my hand and slide off the mattress, padding across the cool floor. Her eyes rest heavy against my back, and I don’t close the door as I pinch the condom off and toss it in the trash. Doing so would put up a barrier between us, and I’m not ready for that. I push my dick back into my shorts and find

a washcloth in a basket on the counter, adjusting the faucet until the temperature is perfect.

Back in the room, Allie is sitting with her knees bent and her arms wrapped around her legs. Her eyes meet mine and then her attention drifts to what I have in my hand.

I climb on the end of the bed and touch her hand. "Open your legs. Let me clean you."

"You don't have to," she says, but I fix her with a look that's determined enough to make her comply.

The way she drags the fabric of her dress up and over her legs is like the best kind of tease. Her panties are still on, but when she slowly parts her legs, they're transparent and clingy from her arousal. "Lift up," I say, hooking my hands into the sides so I can remove them and get a good look at any potential damage I've left behind. I swear, if she's sore, I'm never going to forgive myself.

Allie blushes hard but wriggles out of the scrap of fabric. I shift closer, taking the wet cloth, scanning her pretty pink pussy for signs of ravage. Her clit is still swollen, and her entrance is slick, but thank goodness, she seems fine.

My eyelids drop from relief and also because looking between her legs has me hard again.

"Carson." Her hand rests on my arm. "What is it? Why are you so worried?"

"I was selfish," I tell her as I press the warm cloth to her skin. She exhales as I gently clean her, and wriggles against the cloth. I guess the roughness of the fabric, the pressure and the warmth are arousing.

“You gave me exactly what I needed,” she says.

“I did?”

My surprised eyes meet hers and she nods in affirmation, but I don't believe her. Allie's just a good person. She'd make any type of excuse for me, and I don't deserve that kind of kindness.

“Look, Allie...”

“Carson. You're a good person and you don't need to apologize, okay? Didn't you feel me come hard? Jesus. You fucked the living daylight out of me. In a million years, I couldn't have asked for it to be that good. I didn't even know sex like that was possible. You've opened my eyes.”

“I have?”

She nods and takes my hand. “Come lie with me.”

I don't deserve her acceptance or affection, but I can't resist it. When I rest my head next to hers on the pillow, she does what I'd fantasized about and runs her fingernails across my scalp.

Closing my eyes is dangerous. Answering her questions about my work and my family, my hopes and dreams is dangerous, too. I tell her so much under her soft caress, that by the time there's a knock at the door encouraging us to go down for dinner, I feel like she's peeled up my corners to discover the secrets beneath.

*Stupid.*

I'm not supposed to tell anyone anything about my family. Family is private. Allie's a journalist. Everything I've revealed

could be used against me. A shiver of fear raises the hair on my arms, but before we leave the sanctuary of her bed, she presses a soft kiss onto my forehead.

“You’re a good man, Carson,” she says, and I so want to believe her.

I really do.





## ALLIE

First, Carson displayed his power and strength. He used my body with a ferocity that I didn't expect, but I responded to nonetheless. Then he gave me an insight into why he apologized a million times for giving me the most powerful orgasm I've ever had. It was like he tore it out of me, leaving me breathless and ruined.

Then he opened his heart.

I don't think he wanted to.

But after we shared such an intense experience, it was like he felt he owed me a glimpse into what's inside him and what makes him the way he is.

And after we talked, I became sure of one thing. If I ever come face to face with his father, there will be a murder.

How can a man be so destructive to his own child? It makes me sick to even think about it.

Sadder still is the long-term impact it's had on Carson's confidence. When he told me he was thinking about giving up tattooing, I couldn't hold in my disagreement.

"You can't give up your dream," I blurted. "You're so talented."

"There are a lot of other artists more talented than me." The defeat in his voice broke my heart.

“There’s no one out there exactly like you,” I told him. “You bring your own take...your own flavor to everything you do. You have to see the value in that because if you don’t believe in yourself, then no one else will be confident in your abilities.”

He nodded, but I don’t feel like I really reached him.

Maybe it’s because my confidence in him didn’t ring true. Maybe he can sense my own fears about my abilities that keep me chained to a job that isn’t what I really want. Maybe we’re more similar than I’d ever want him to know.

Carson fucked me in the most controlling and clinical way, but somehow, I feel connected to him as much as I would be if he’d been tender. Maybe more so.

He left the room first to change before dinner.

And I stayed to take another shower.

For a man who fucks in such a hard and savage way, he was so affectionate and considerate after.

I touch between my legs, finding the sensation there strange. I’m not sore as such. It’s like Stefan and Carson have left a presence behind them. My body has a level of awareness that it didn’t have before.

I rest my hand over my heart because there’s a difference there, too. I know that sex isn’t just a physical act. Even if there’s no relationship, it brings with it a kind of emotional connection. At least, it seems that way.

Being held by a man. Being kissed and caressed. Taking them inside your body. All of those elements have changed the way I feel about Stefan and Carson. They're no longer just strangers taking part in an interview process. They're men who I've shared a big experience with. Men I've come to know in a way that most other people will never see or feel.

When I've finished dressing in a vibrant green slouchy shirt dress, there's a knock at my door. When I open it, I come face to face with Oliver. Is he next? My heart skitters at the thought of putting my body and mind through more. I don't think I can do it. I need time to process what's happened today. I need time to write about it, too.

"Hey." He shifts his stance and pushes his hands into the pockets of his slacks. Rather than appearing relaxed, there's a pensiveness in his expression that feels awkward. "I just wanted to check in with you, away from the group. You know, to make sure you're really okay."

It's a kind gesture, but I'm not sure why he feels it's his job. He's not my daddy, even though he's probably quite close to my father's age. Is that why he's worried about me?

Worried, but not enough to have refused to pick a string and have a place in the lineup.

"I'm good, Oliver," I say. "You don't need to worry."

"Are you sure?"

I frown and take a moment to think about how to approach the situation. Part of me finds this whole 'check up on Allie thing' patronizing. Does he really think I don't know my own mind? I have enough of this kind of thing from my parents. "I

am.” I make sure I say the words firmly so nothing can be misconstrued.

Oliver’s jaw ticks, but he doesn’t reply. Whatever he wants to say is trapped firmly between his teeth.

“I’m ready to come down,” I say. “Does the food look good?”

“Yeah. Clay made a sausage casserole. It’s not top of my list of favorite cuisines, but it looks okay.”

“Great.” I beam brightly, hoping that by being upbeat, Oliver’s mood will improve.

“And the guys have suggested we play some drinking games...I’m not sure it’s a good idea. Maybe you should go to bed early?”

“It’s been a long time since I played a drinking game. It could be fun.”

Oliver’s jaw twitches again and as a rumble of laughter travels up the stairs, he glances away from me.

“Is there something you need to say to me?” I ask him.

He draws in a long breath, but his lips remain thin. Then he turns and begins to head downstairs, leaving me to follow.

Dinner is uneventful, other than the mini-interrogation about Carson’s sexual prowess. Clay slaps him on the back like a proud father whose son has just graduated.

The food is demolished, and the plates are cleared and we head out to the seating area by the pool for after-dinner drinks.

Someone puts on a soulful playlist with a sexy twist, and I settle onto the edge of a sunbed. Stefan brings me a blanket in case the slight chill of the night air is too much for me.

Carson emerges from the kitchen with a small bowl of chocolate ice cream, garnished with a fresh strawberry and presents it with a wink. I cover my legs with the blanket and devour the dessert, as my heart warms from their unexpected, sweet attentiveness.

Theron lines up eleven shot glasses and expertly pours tequila across them with minimal spillage. “He used to be a barman,” Gabe says, producing the salt and lemon. I get a flash of Theron doing the same kind of mixing as Tom Cruise did in *Cocktail*. We drink the first shot as a group, with some participants more eager than others.

Jonas suggests starting the drinking game for the second shot but then struggles to come up with the question. Theron glances at the glasses that stand like tulips in the sun. “How about everyone drinks if they’ve ever had fantasies about one of their teachers?”

“Shit.” I reach for a glass and Gabe, who’s sitting next to me, claps me on the back so hard I almost spill the shot.

“You seriously had a crush on a teacher?”

“Didn’t you?”

The grimace on his face is hilarious. “I went to a catholic school. All the staff were ancient and gross or nuns.”

A few of the men recount details of their sexy teachers and the ridiculously young ages they were crushing on them. Looking back, Mr. Sanderson wasn’t exactly good looking.

There was just something boyish and kind about him that stood out amongst the other gray has-beens at my school.

“What about...everyone has to drink if they’ve never had sex in the ocean,” Jonas says, already reaching for a shot.

“The criteria can’t always involve never having done something sexual, otherwise I’m going to be drinking every round,” I complain, already feeling the warmth of the liquor spread from my stomach to my mind. Seasoned drinker I am not.

“Okay. Let’s make it about something else,” Stefan suggests, giving me a conspiratorial wink. “Drink if you’ve ever been in love?” He leans back in his chair and rests his hands on his knees.

“What? Seriously?” Tom reaches out for a shot and knocks it back without bothering with the salt and lemon. He grimaces, using the back of his hand to wipe his mouth. “You’ve never been in love?”

Stefan shrugs. “Nope.”

“Dude.” Jimmy doesn’t down a drink either, but he seems more concerned about Stefan’s lack of a fulfilling love life.

Oliver drinks, as does Gabe, but none of the other men lift a glass, and neither do I. What a sad group. Three out of eleven have experienced a loving relationship. That’s terrible odds.

“So, this is interesting,” I say, waving my hand around the group. “We’ve talked a lot about sex, but do you think your size has impacted the progression of your relationships, either positively or negatively?”

“Big dick, less love, you mean?”

“Yes, Jimmy. I’m interested to hear your thoughts.”

Stefan raises his hand, and I smile in his direction. “I think there can be a certain amount of objectification. Like, you sleep with one woman and word gets around and then the women who are interested in you when they know are fetishizing your dick.”

“That’s true,” Clay says. “We’ve definitely experienced that.”

Carson jerks his head in agreement. “It’s like when a woman has giant fake tits. That’s all a guy sees. The great personality or the kind heart are overshadowed by the overt sexual part of her and the men who are into that kind of thing are fetishizing her chest rather than thinking about a longer-term relationship with her.”

“That’s deep, man.” Jonas isn’t serious for long, though. “I love big tits.”

Of course he does.

“How about you have to drink if you’ve never participated in a threesome,” Theron says, getting the game back on track.

“Sex, man,” Stefan reminds him, but Theron doesn’t revise the question.

I reach out for my shot glass, and some of the men drink, but I find it hard to keep track of who’s consumed the most alcohol. It’s too dark and they respond too quickly to the questions.

We play a few more rounds and thank goodness I don’t have to drink again. Instead, I lay back on the sunbed and stare up at the stars, trying to identify constellations and



tuning out the conversation that drifts away from drinking games back to sexy teachers.

The food and alcohol have made me groggy, and I must fall asleep because I don't register Carson leaving his seat until his weight shifts the sunbed and he's looming over me.

His fingers trail my jaw and down my neck, his eyes flicking over my face. "Are you okay?"

"Was I sleeping?"

"I think so." He smirks. "Are we that boring?"

"I'm just that tired."

He laces his fingers through mine and brings my hand to his mouth, planting a soft kiss on my knuckles. "You looked like snow white, waiting for her prince to come and kiss her awake."

"He doesn't kiss her hand," I remind him. "He kisses her lips."

Carson takes my comment as the invitation that it is, not caring about the rest of the men around us who have noticed enough for the conversation to fade into silence. I'm sleepy and relaxed, and the kiss is gentle and easy, so different from the Carson I encountered in my bedroom. It's like the conversation and affection we shared after the sex has altered the way he wants to interact with me.

A whistle breaks the silence and someone else yells 'get a room'. Carson's hand trails down my neck, over my shoulder and cups my breast and I freeze, holding a breath tightly in my lungs. A kiss feels natural and fine in front of others, but this is different. This is the start of making this exchange of affection

a show for onlookers and that...well that's a giant leap from where I am right now.

At least, it is until he brushes the point of my nipple with his thumb and whispers in my ear, "Let me show them how sexy you are."

When his lips brush mine, all my attention is his. Flashes of his hand on my neck, gripping my hair, slapping my ass, fucking me hard, rush through my mind. When they mingle with his softer stroking touches, a fire ignites between my thighs.

It can't be more than three hours since he made me come, but my body feels ravenous for more. All the years I've managed without sex, and now it feels like starvation to not be beneath a man.

When his hand strokes up my thigh, I moan against him, and when he pushes my dress up to my waist, I don't object. Instead, a shiver of awareness stirs my clit, and the cooler night air licks my flesh.

Their eyes are on me. I can feel them. Heated gazes. Hungry stares. Desire.

The atmosphere is thick with it.

I should stop him. The thought tickles the edge of my consciousness as his tongue strokes into my mouth, but I don't. His hand moves to the inside of my thigh, easing my legs apart, stroking up and down, each time getting closer to touching where I'm aching.

A tinkle of laughter travels from the nearest house, a contrast to utter silence surrounding me.

*They're looking, watching. They're seeing everything.*

And the knowledge is like a flame to fall-dry leaves.

"Good girl," Carson whispers across my lips as his fingers move beneath my flimsy panties and pull them aside.

Then he turns his head and asks. "Who's next on the list?"

Whoever it is scrapes their chair noisily, and my heart thuds with anticipation. A kiss is pressed to my ankle and the inside of my knee. "Are you okay with this?" It's Jimmy but his voice is different. Lower. Huskier. Uncertain.

I don't know. My inhibitions are deeply rooted, but Carson's rewired me.

"Yes."

The response comes from a place deep inside. Not my mind. Not my heart. The part of me that craves but so rarely ever gets listened to. My mind screams that this is crazy. This behavior isn't me. My heart squeezes, worried about mixed-up feelings, anxious about what effect this might have on my place in the group and the task I have to complete.

But the craving part reaches out for Jimmy, finding his warm face, thumb grazing his lips. He nips at my flesh as Carson licks into my mouth and I'm lost in sensation, drowning in the heat of two men.

Jimmy doesn't need a more formal invitation to bend his head between my thighs and kiss my clit. Carson's hand is still wrapped around my panties and he keeps it there, giving Jimmy the access that he needs. Carson's still in control, even though Jimmy has the prime position.

Jimmy knows what he needs to do, or maybe I'm just buzzing from the knowledge that eight men are watching his tongue flick against my sensitized flesh. When my pussy squeezes tight from pleasure, Jimmy presses his fingers to my entrance. I think it's two. It feels like two, curved perfectly to reach the little bundle of nerves that makes me want to grunt every time he hits it. His tongue continues circling but then he says, "That's it, baby. Can you take another finger?"

"She can." Carson replies for me, staring into my eyes as he does. "She can take four. Maybe five. With work she could take a whole fist." He sounds proud, but I gasp, the image of him pressing his fist inside me too far over the line.

Jimmy adds another finger, and the stretch is like cherry liquor dripping onto my tongue. I allow my legs to flop open wider as he adds a fourth. I'm so wet. The sound of him pumping into my flesh is all that can be heard. My hips have a life of their own, rising to chase more contact, and Jimmy's heavy hand presses against my belly, fixing me in place so he can suck on my clit, forcing brilliant white pleasure that's so sensitive I cry out. Carson strokes my hair, his eyes so close to mine that the spread of his pupils is visible even in the darkness. "See what it feels like," he says. "To let go. To not worry about what the consequences of your actions might be. To not hear anyone else's disapproving words in your mind. It's like a drug."

I whimper as Jimmy's tongue becomes more persistent and his fingers rougher.

"Do you want his cock?" Carson asks, brushing the tip of his nose across mine.

He's so close he obliterates anything else. There's just me and him. No, that's not quite right. It's just Carson. Jimmy and I are dangling puppets within his total control.

The other men are the audience, waiting for a climax to a show they didn't buy tickets for.

I hold Carson's face tightly between my palms. "Why?" I whisper.

I don't mean why is he asking me if I want Jimmy's cock. I mean, why does he want this? Why does he need this?

Is it about control? He had me and now he doesn't want anyone else to unless he's directing...unless he's giving permission?

"Ten fucks in your bedroom aren't going to give you the experience you're looking for, Allie. You want to know what sex can be like. You want your buffet of flavors. Well, this is it."

Oh, it's about me?

I think it's about both of us.

But he's right. If I'm breaking self-imposed barriers, I might as well trample them to the ground. If self-discovery was for the fainthearted, we'd all be experts by now rather than just muddling through.

"Don't take it too far," a voice warns from the gloom. I'm not sure who it is, but Carson doesn't even flinch.

"Is it too far?"

We breathe the same air, our bodies moving in sync. It's too far. Of course it is. But do I want to be over there, where it's

predictable and safe, or over here where I'm stretched thin,  
and pushed to the very brink?

I think I know.



## JIMMY

It was Russell who spoke out, breaking into the whispers between Allie and Carson. This whole thing hasn't felt real from the moment he kissed her in front of us all.

And now it's me who has to decide whether I want to do this or not.

Fucking in front of other people isn't a big deal. I've been to parties like orgies. I've shared rooms with friends on vacation and watched them fuck their hookups without blinking an eye. Sex has become like that. Nothing's private anymore.

Did I imagine my moment with Allie was going to be like this?

No. Absolutely not.

Do I think she should go through with this? Well, it isn't my decision.

This proposal is about Allie getting to experience sexual freedom, and if she wants this, it's totally her decision. I'll be her partner in exploration.

But if Carson is coercing her...if the group is worried, then I'll back away.

Whatever Allie wants, Allie gets.

"Carson, you need to back up," Oliver says. "Give her a minute. Let her breathe and decide."



“It’s okay,” Allie says, grabbing hold of Carson’s shoulder and holding him in place. “I’m okay. This is what I want.”

Well, shit. I was not expecting her to sound that certain. I don’t even have a condom, which is stupid. I knew I was third, so I should have been prepared. No scout badges for me. Carson won’t award me any points.

My legs are aching from the run I took earlier, and this sunbed isn’t exactly the sturdiest piece of furniture to fuck on or the optimal height. I can think of a million places that I could fuck Allie that would be better than here, but I’m not walking away because of logistics.

“Here,” Theron says, shoving a foil packet into my hand. His eyes linger on Allie’s sweet pink pussy, glistening with her arousal. She’s ready for me. Of that, I’m certain.

Carson’s hand is still wrapped around her panties and he’s going to need to move it for me to have enough space, but he doesn’t seem to want to. I tap his elbow as I unzip my jeans. He gets the hint and releases Allie’s panties. I wrap my cock with an unusual tremble in my hands. Shit. I need to get it together. The urge to bounce on my toes is overwhelming. I crack my knuckles before I slide my hands up Allie’s legs, hooking my fingers into the sides of her panties and easing them down. Her pretty feet lift from the bed and then drop back. I want to kiss her, but Carson is there, still hovering, still the only person in her line of sight.

I rest my knees on either side of her hips, using my cock to stroke through her labia, teasing. I can’t see her expression, but I can feel when she clenches in response. I get to watch her clit swell and feel her get wetter. There’s a strange sense

of separation, but I push inside her in one firm thrust, closing my eyes as she grips me like a vise.

“Does that feel good?” Carson asks her.

“Yes,” she whispers.

“Is he thick?” Carson’s fingers squeeze her breast as he asks the question, and I feel her body’s response around me.

“Yes,” she gasps as I begin to move.

“Shit,” Theron says from behind me. The eight men currently not involved are getting to watch their own live porno whether they want to or not.

As I keep a steady tempo, adding a thumb to her clit, Carson pushes down the top of her dress and the strapless bra she’s wearing beneath. He sucks her nipples, first one, then the other, leaving them pink tipped and glossy and I finally get the eye contact I’ve been craving.

“Jimmy,” Allie whispers, reaching out a hand to clasp my arm.

“Yes, princess.” I take her hand in mine and bring it to my lips. Her eyes roll as I push in deeper...as deep as I can go. She takes me so well, as though her body was shaped just for me.

I want Carson to leave us now. I want Allie all to myself. If I could, I’d pick her up and take her into the house. Maybe finish against the wall with my mouth pressed to hers. But I’m not alone. I’m linked to these other nine men, and Allie isn’t mine.

“You feel so good,” I tell her. “This...it’s fucking crazy...are you sure...”

I don't get to finish because her eyes roll as Carson bites her and then she's coming, clamping down so hard I have to grit my teeth. She's so tight her orgasm triggers mine, and I cry out, grasping onto her hips, releasing deep inside her, feeling like my brain is going to explode and this whole experience will be the death of me. I throw my head back, startled at the explosion of stars above us, and Allie continues to grip my hand through it all.

Carson kisses her lips. "You were perfect," he says. Then he turns to me.

"Take her inside."

He doesn't need to tell me twice. I'm still inside her when I pick her up. She wraps her legs around my waist and her arms around my neck, and I stride toward the doors. My heart is beating so fast and hard I know she'll feel it against her cheek. All I want to do is get us away from onlookers so I can talk to her and take care of her.

It's instinct to retreat to my room, and only when the door is closed behind us do I consider that maybe she would have preferred to go to her own space.

I take a seat on the edge of the mattress, and Allie turns to face me. "Jimmy."

Her eyes drift to the space between us where we're still joined and I'm still hard as a fucking iron bar. "Are you okay?" I ask.

Her lips find mine as an answer and we kiss like teens on a first date, discovering each other in the weirdest backward way, and before I know what's happening, she starts to move

in my lap. It's little movements of her hips at first, just rocking against me, testing the depth of my cock. I stay still, unsure whether she's still feeling the aftereffects of her orgasm or if she wants to go again. I don't feel like I can presume because this situation is messed up.

When the shallow rocking becomes deeper, I grab her face and hold her still in front of me.

"You want to fuck again?"

Her coffee-colored eyes blink fast, her lashes casting dancing shadows over her cheekbones before she nods.

"Seriously, Allie. Are you sure about any of this?"

"You're in me. You're hard. I think the sex is happening already."

I pull my eyebrows into an exaggerated upside-down V and nod. "You're right. The time for pre-sex conversation was over a while back."

"Yeah. We're a mile down the road, Jimmy. No turning back now."

"You're cute when you're flirty and philosophical."

She grins. "It's a winning combination that secures the hottest of fuck buddies."

I put my hand over my heart and drop my expression to something comically sad. "Is that all I am to you? A cock to use?"

"A cock attached to a staggeringly beautiful body and a very pretty face." She touches my eyebrow, and my temple, brushing the shell of my ear and then my cheek.

“Now you’re just trying to get into my pants.”

We laugh, and it’s cute, but the way it makes her pussy squeeze causes the blood to leave my head in a rush. Jesus. I drop back and she climbs over me, rocking her hips as I help her control the movements with my hands splayed over her dress.

“Show me how to make it good,” she says.

“Like this.” I tug on her hips, showing her the rhythm that feels the best, then I angle her body closer to mine. I would prefer her naked and the clothes I’m still wearing are stifling, but it feels too good and it’s taking every ounce of concentration and restraint for me to keep going.

Allie pushes her hands under my shirt, searching my body with greedy strokes. “Damn, you’re ripped.” Her panted compliment is music to my ears. I roll her until she’s beneath me, hooking one of her legs over my shoulder and driving deep. “Fuck. Fuck.”

She comes hard, twitching beneath me and I’m filling the condom before I realize it’s for the second time. Shit. Stupid. Stupid. I pull out in a flash. Rolling onto my back again, I check around the condom, but it seems okay. Allie might be happy leaving with some memories, but a baby is a whole other story.

She twists until she’s lying in a letter c shape facing me, so I do the same.

*Don’t fall asleep.* The urge to give into the sandman and pass out is real.

“I can’t believe we did that,” she says, biting her lip to conceal a smile. I search her expression for regret but find none.

“Me either.” I run my hand over her tricep, relishing her smooth skin and the softness of her body.

“And you carried me up the stairs like I weigh nothing, which I know isn’t true.”

“All those hours in the gym paid off,” I grin.

“You really are in fantastic shape.” Those greedy hands run down the front of my shirt, counting my abs and following the V of my adonis muscles into my pants. It tickles, so I grab her hand. Also, if she touches my dick again, he’ll go hard and then I’ll have to do something about it and the poor girl’s been fucked too much already today.

“I went running along the beach today. That’s the best form of exercise.”

Allie’s eyes light up. “Can I come with you in the morning before breakfast? I’ll be slow, but I really want to try.”

“Sure.”

She touches my face tenderly enough to cause my eyelids to droop. “Can I stay here tonight? My legs are like jello and I don’t think I can make it back to my room.”

“Of course, but I can carry you if you want.”

“My hero,” she says, but begins to crawl her way up to the pillows and find the edge of the sheet. “Lesson for today.” She’s already under the covers, yawning loudly. “Sex is really exhausting.”

“That’s true.” I should get up to clean my teeth but two orgasms and too many shots of tequila have stolen my last fuck about oral hygiene. I’ll run my electric toothbrush for four minutes in the morning to make up for it.

I shove my jeans to the floor and yank off my shirt, and by the time I crawl into bed, Allie’s already asleep, her breathing soft and even. With her hair spread out across the pillow, she looks like a wild fairy, so peaceful but untamed.

Gathering her into my arms is an unexpected need I don’t resist. She moans softly but then snuggles her face into my chest. I don’t remember the last time I slept all night with a woman. If it’s a one-night stand, I never take them back to my place and I never fall asleep.

But it’s nice. More than nice.

It feels right, like all my manly protective instincts are primed and my role in life is fulfilled. Ridiculous but true. Even though I’m exhausted, I don’t sleep for the longest time, listening to the rhythm of Allie’s slumber and relishing the feeling of companionship that comes with sharing a bed.

In the morning, I wake to my alarm and Allie groans. Her leg is slung over mine, and her hand is pressed into the middle of my chest. It’s the sweetest feeling to be tucked up with a beautiful girl, even though the circumstances are a long way from normal.

“Time to wake up,” I say, brushing the tangled hair from her cheek. “Get your running shoes on.”

Allie groans again and snuggles deeper into my chest, wrapping her arms around me until we're lying on our sides, fused together like a ying yang symbol. "Do we have to?" she asks. "Can't we just work off our calories in other ways?"

Between us, I'm rock-hard and ready to go, but I've already overstepped the arrangement. The rules are one and done, although I guess Carson's breached that part too. I don't want to ruin it for Gabe and the others who are coming after me. Most importantly, I don't want to make it bad for Allie either. She's so little and we're all so huge.

"Running. Then breakfast. I make excellent protein pancakes if we have the ingredients downstairs."

"Anyone ever tell you you're a machine?"

"It's my job to be motivated. How would I motivate anyone else if I can't do it for myself?"

She kisses in between my pecs, and I kiss the top of her head, trying to press all the affection I feel into her skin.

"How do you do it?" she asks. "How do you tell yourself to do the hard things and make yourself listen?"

The sudden shift in her tone makes me wonder if Allie's talking about something deeper than running. "I guess it's about looking further into the future and focusing on the outcome you're seeking. Like, today's run won't improve your fitness very much. It's one brick in the wall. But if you keep doing it...keep pushing and building...you'll get to the top where you want to be."

She nods and rolls away from me, lost in her own thoughts.



“And listening to yourself...well...that’s about trusting your voice and respecting it. If you tell yourself to do something, you listen as though it’s a friend telling you, and you do whatever it is. After a while, your internal voice goes from being a whisper to an order. And you only tell yourself things that are positive. No internal criticism. Just action-based thoughts.”

“Sounds very military.” She’s tugging her dress down and rubbing her hands over her face, still not fully awake.

“It is, in a way. At least, that’s how it feels. But now, I don’t break the commitments I make to myself. My own promises are the most important to me.”

“So, I need to promise things to myself?”

“In a way.”

I swing my legs from the bed and turn back, raising my hands over my head to stretch. Allie eyes me, her lips parting as she ogles all the way down my chest, over my abs and around my cock with her heated gaze.

“Don’t look at me like that.” I grab my aching dick and squeeze, but it doesn’t help. He’s expecting action, not to be stuffed inside my running shorts.

“I can’t help it. I mean, how do you get any work done with all the women falling at your feet? Like, do you train women? How on earth do they resist you?”

I rub the back of my neck, as heat floods my cheeks, and watch Allie stand and round the bed. When she’s in front of me, her cool fingers touch my abs. “How does a person even get this ripped?”

I take her wrist before she can reach my dick. “By not skipping my morning runs.”

“Okay. I’m going,” she laughs. “Give me five.”

“I’ll meet you downstairs.”

Allie appears in ten, dressed in tight shorts and a bra top that leaves nothing to the imagination. I’ve found two bottles of cool water and opened the sliding doors to the pool so we can access the beach. We’re the only two up this early, so it’s easy to escape. “I’m meeting the neighbor at eight,” Allie says. “Just enough time to humiliate myself.”

I bend to kiss her lips. “You’ve got this.”

“You haven’t seen me run.”

The air has that warm, damp early morning feel and is scented with the dew-covered flowers that surround the perimeter of the property. We make our way down the stairs and at the bottom, Allie rests her hands on her hips and surveys the ocean. It’s a little calmer than yesterday and the light makes the horizon blur from sea to sky. “God, it’s beautiful,” she says. “I could get used to living here and seeing this every morning.”

“Me too.”

I inhale deeply and tip my head to the sky, feeling all the tension of the past few months slipping away. I shake my fingers and bounce on my toes. The city can be fun, but the pressure to keep up, to conform with the expectations of a premier personal trainer is tough. I just want to enjoy a simple

life. To spend each day filled with laughter and love, and right now, my real life lacks both.

“Come on shorty.” I ruffle Allie’s hair, and she squeals, shoving my hand away. I start running, and Allie joins me a few seconds behind, pushing to catch up. The urge to extend to my top speed is there, my muscles screaming to let go, but I don’t want to outrun Allie by too much. This isn’t about me hitting my performance targets or making her feel bad about her fitness. This is about us sharing something, and Allie getting to fulfill a promise she made to herself. It might be a small promise, but getting to complete this run is a step toward her beginning to listen to her internal voice.

Whatever was behind the questions she asked earlier remains unresolved, and if our time together today can help clear her mind...well, I’ll be a happy man.

I run at her speed, relishing the wind as it whips over my skin, loving the feeling of Allie at my side. She does a lot better than I expected, and after twenty minutes, I slow down to take a drink. Allie’s panting hard and her back is glistening with sweat, but her expression is bright and after glugging back half her bottle of water, she looks to the sky and laughs.

“See,” I say. “It’s awesome, isn’t it?”

“It is,” she agrees. “So frickin’ awesome.” She bends at the waist, stretching her hands to the sand, then tucks her legs up behind her one at a time to stretch her glutes.

I’m used to working out with women. Many of my clients like to run with a partner for encouragement and safety. But I’ve never run with anyone I’ve slept with before and the connection makes the experience feel different. It’s nice to

share my passion this way. I'd enjoy running with Allie again if I haven't put her off.

"We could do this tomorrow morning, if you'd like."

"Trying to get me into better shape?" she jokes.

"Enjoying your company."

Her expression brightens as she swipes damp tendrils of chestnut hair from her forehead. "I've enjoyed your company too. Yeah. Let's do it again tomorrow. I'm feeling very righteous right now. I could do with feeling this way every morning."

She glances at her watch and then twists to scan further down the beach. "I'm meeting Natalie from next door now."

I rest my hand on her elbow and lean in for a soft kiss that steals the breath from my lungs. "I'm glad you decided to take a chance with us," I tell her.

"Is that what I'm doing?" She blinks her honey eyes.

"Yeah. That's what you're doing."

"I'm glad I did too."

I watch her turn and walk down the beach until I see Natalie emerge from the back of her property. The realization that my time with Allie is over spears me in the gut but I do what I always do, and run again, letting the pounding of my feet on the sand distract my mind from regret.



## ALLIE

When Natalie appears on the beach, exiting a door at the back of her in-law's property and descending the stairs, Jimmy sprints back up the beach in the opposite direction, turning into a tiny dot in seconds. I knew he wasn't pushing himself when we ran together.

Watching his retreating form, I'm struck with longing for him to return and smile at me again. It's a silly emotion that I need to keep in check.

Natalie's dressed in blue linen shorts with an elastic waist and a white strapless top that tucks in. She has a large black camera with a trunk-like lens and a brown leather backpack hooked over both shoulders.

She's cool, calm, and collected, and I'm a sweaty mess. She's also practically a stranger, but I'm so happy to see another woman, it's laughable. I jog toward her, and she waves.

"Hey. I wasn't sure you were going to make it. Have you been running already?"

"Yeah. Sorry about the sweat. Two of the guys I'm staying with are personal trainers, and one encouraged me to join him for a run. The result isn't pretty." I wave my hand around my face to illustrate the point.

"You're glowing with virtuous exercise glory," she smiles. "My kids still wake up in the night, so getting out of bed early

to work out is impossible.”

“I don’t have that excuse and the last time I exercised was when the elevator broke in my building, and I had to take three flights of stairs.”

Natalie chuckles, and her hand reaches out to grasp her camera. “Shall we walk and talk? The scenery is calling me.”

“Sure.”

Turning in the opposite direction to the beach house, we make our way closer to the ocean. I pause to slip off my sneakers and socks as Natalie snaps a few shots and studies the display for the results. She adjusts the lens and fiddles with the settings and snaps again.

“The lighting is perfect.”

“So, are your husbands looking after the kids?”

“Yep. Well, Max is sleeping. He was working last night. And Mason’s using the gym, so Miller is currently supervising.”

“Wow, I really do see the benefit of your arrangement.”

She grins and tucks her blonde hair behind her ear, as the wind whips around us. “Many hands make light work...isn’t that what they say?”

We keep walking and a wave laps over my toes, so cool I gasp.

“So, how are the interviews progressing?”

“Well. It’s...it’s not your average topic we’re discussing.”

She glances at me quizzically. “That sounds intriguing.”

“I write for a women’s magazine. They’re always making me cover sex topics.”

“You’re talking about sex with those ten hotties. How are you keeping it professional?”

I’ve never been good at keeping my thoughts to myself. They always end up written all over my expression, especially when I’m guilty. It’s an emotion I just don’t seem able to conceal. Natalie stifles a smile. “I know that look,” she says. “I used to look in the mirror and see that reflection staring back at me.”

I cover my face with my hands and wipe my palms over my cheeks in an attempt to wipe away the embarrassment. “I’m failing to keep it professional to a level that can only be described as epic.”

“Between you and me, I slept with Mason after photographing him for a romance book cover. Then I found out he was going to be my stepbrother. That’s just about as mortifying as it can get.”

I stare open-mouthed because Natalie doesn’t seem the type. She’s got a sensible air about her, from the neat way she dresses to her sleek, shiny hair and super straight posture.

“And then,” she continues, “I somehow ended up in bed with them all.”

“Yeah, I’m still trying to get my head around that part, although, after last night, I got a better idea about how easy it is to get into a situation like that.”

In front of us, the beach stretches, empty and wild. Without the beach houses looming to the right at long intervals, it



would be picture perfect. The tranquility settles against my skin, but it doesn't touch the buzzing inside me.

Natalie clicks another shot of a bird, swooping, and then turns to me. "Yeah, you can't drop a sentence like that and not elaborate."

I've had sex with three men. I've been intimate with two men at the same time, in front of eight others. The woman I was when I arrived at this place is dead and buried, and the person I am now has arisen in her place. My body is alive in ways it's never been before, an awareness spinning through me like bright pink cotton candy.

It sounds so stupid, but it's like I've been asleep my whole life without dreaming, and now I'm wide awake and everything seems more vivid. Keeping this transformation to myself would be like shutting myself back in a box. I don't want to dwell in the gloom again. I want to be out in the sunshine. And Natalie understands. She's living this life herself.

I clear my throat and stare at the horizon. "Let's just say I had a thing with two of them in front of the other eight."

"Oooo," she gasps. "That's hot. Like exhibitionism and voyeurism all rolled into a delightful parcel."

"I guess it is." Struggling to look at her during this confession, I swing my sneakers back and forth.

"Was it hot?"

"Yeah. Definitely. I never thought I'd be into that kind of thing, but it was freeing, you know, like I let go of this big

weight I've been carrying around and allowed myself to drift into the ether."

"Hot enough to repeat?"

Now there's a question I haven't turned over in my mind. "It wasn't planned. It just kind of happened, and now I'm not sure what will happen next."

"Whatever you want." Natalie's so quick to reply that I swivel my head in her direction, shocked. "I mean," she continues. "There are a lot of men in that house. That could be a lot of pressure. Just as long as you're cool with what's happening, and it's what you want."

"It's funny but I don't feel pressure from them," I say. "I've just got this constant monologue running in my head about whether I'm doing the right thing, whether I'm good enough, whether the decisions I'm making are the right ones. I wish I could just switch that part off, you know. Just be able to live like some of my friends...like you."

She snorts and grips my shoulder the way you would if you were about to impart some serious life lessons. "We all have that voice. It's just some people are better at telling it to shut the fuck up."

"Did you wonder if you were enough for your husbands?"

She nods, grimacing at the memory. "My ex was an asshole. He destroyed my confidence. When I met the triplets, I had zero belief in myself."

"So, how?" I ask. "How did you find it?"

"They helped me believe I could do whatever I wanted to do. They supported me. They gave me the freedom to

experience life and waited for me to come home. They were patient and kind and surrounded by that patience and kindness, I blossomed again.”

“They sound like amazing men.”

The peaceful shushing sound of the waves is interrupted by some whooping male voices and, when I turn, Theron, Tom and Clay are in the distance, running toward the sea. Natalie follows my gaze and chuckles softly. “They really are like kids sometimes.”

“Yeah,” I say. “But you know what’s cool about the men I’m currently shackled up with?”

“What?”

“They’re all so chill with each other. I was imagining there would be some friction by now between the ones who don’t know each other, but there’s nothing. Well, I guess there have been some movements of disagreement, but they’ve been handled in a really mature and respectful way. Everyone listens well too. It’s so much more peaceful and non-confrontational than I imagined it could be.”

“Seriously? That surprises me. I thought my men were chill with each other because they grew in the same womb. My friend, Connie, is with two sets of twins, so four brothers and they’re all cooperative. I didn’t think it would be the case with ten men who aren’t closely related.”

“Me either.”

“Sounds like you have the makings of a harem.” Natalie raises her eyebrows suggestively, and even as I shake my head, I consider what that could be like.

Sexually, it would be epic. More epic than it's possible for me to imagine with my limited experience. Emotionally, it would be interesting. No two men would have the same way of interacting with me. Different love languages would make for variety and they'd each have something different to bring when it comes to supporting me. Economically, it would be amazing. Eleven people working to sustain one household would make everything a breeze. And most importantly, there would be so much fun.

But that's all really one way. They'd never all feel satisfied being with just me. I barely feel like I have enough to go around when I'm single, let alone dealing with the expectations and needs of ten very demanding individuals. How could I possibly meet their needs?

"Seriously, though. What are you looking for in your life, Allie? Do you feel like you're on the right path?"

I shake my head, watching the men I already feel so much affection for cutting through the water in a synchronized crawl. "Everything in my life feels wrong, but I never do anything about it."

Natalie pushes her hands into her pockets and watches the ocean too. "Sometimes, fate, or the universe, or whatever, pushes us off a bad path and onto a good one. I can honestly say that's what happened to me. I didn't make good choices. My ex cheated on me, so I was forced to leave him. My friend found me a job, and I just went along with it. The good life that I have now kind of found me. But sometimes, we're the ones who have to make that leap from a path that feels wrong but is predictable, to one that feels right but is scary."

“You weren’t forced to leave your ex,” I say. “That was a conscious and strong decision you made. And your friend might have found you the job, but you accepted the opportunity.”

Natalie purses her lips and nods. “I guess you’re right.”

“But what if you’re not brave enough to do that?” I ask, anxiety already twisting in my belly.

“Then you wait for the push.”

We start walking again, and I wade a little deeper into the ocean, the prickle of cold against my skin a welcome distraction.

And Natalie, maybe sensing my disquiet, fills the silence with memories of being on other beaches at other times, and her stories take me away to distant shores I’ve never even thought of visiting.

Gradually, I leave behind the twisting feeling in my gut and laugh with her, and share funny stories of my own too, and when we’ve walked for an hour and we’re finally back at our respective accommodations, we exchange numbers and genuine hugs.

“I don’t know why,” she says as a parting comment. “But I have a feeling you’re about to change paths and it’s going to be a good thing.”

“I hope you’re right,” I say as I begin the walk back to the men who are changing me without even knowing it. “I really hope you’re right.”



## TOM

I catch Jimmy while I'm fixing coffee and he's stretching after an early morning run. I love running, but I'd rather do it in the evening when the sun is on its way down and I can exercise away any tension I've gathered throughout the day. It helps me sleep too, which shouldn't make sense, but somehow does.

"How was last night...you know...was Allie okay after?"

"She was good," he says. "I made sure of that because...well...it wasn't what I was expecting." He grimaces and I'm immediately sympathetic because I don't know if I would have been able to handle what happened as well as he did.

"I know." I shake my head and rest my hand on the dark counter. "There was a moment when I wondered if I should have stepped in to stop it, but Allie seemed adamant it was something she wanted...then I just felt like I would have been suppressing her desires."

"Same." He nods, reaching over to his outstretched leg to grasp his toes. "I thought Theron was out of line with this idea, but it seems that he read Allie better than all of us. She's on some kind of voyage of self-discovery, of self-exploration, if that makes sense."

"It does." I fold my lips between my teeth and push them out, considering if there's anything else I can ask to make sure that I fulfill her needs and expectations. "What do you think she's expecting now? I mean, last night she stepped over a

line. Do you think she'll want to do that again? Or more." Clearing my throat, I take another sip of coffee. "What I'm asking is, should I get together with Gabe and Clay to find out if they're cool with taking Allie's experience one step further? Or should I just approach this from a solo perspective?"

"I think you should ask Allie what she wants. I might be wrong...I'm not the brightest guy here...but the other guys seem mostly chill. They're probably up for anything, as long as it's okay with Allie."

"What's okay with Allie?" a feminine voice asks from the doorway. Allie appears, dressed in running gear with her hair tugged into a tousled bun. She's windswept and sun-kissed and beautiful for it.

Jimmy steps in to avoid the question. "How was your walk?"

"Calming." She eyes his stretching position and then makes her way past me into the kitchen. "The woman next door really is living her best life."

"Three husbands is living her best life?" Jimmy questions.

"Not just that, although it does seem like an integral part of it. She's just really got things together...her work, her family life, her focus on her goals."

"You sound envious," I say.

Allie shrugs but it's with tension in her shoulders and expression. "She's older than me."

Time and life experience can give people perspective and opportunity, but it isn't everything. People in their eighties can look back on a whole lifetime and not feel as though they



ever did what they wanted to do. Years trickle through our fingers if we're not careful. I've wasted enough of mine to know. I'm about to offer my perspective when the doorbell rings.

The last time we were interrupted was when the dildo making kits were delivered. Intrigued, Jimmy pushes up to stand and the three of us make our way to the front door. As this is Allie's gig, Jimmy and I stand back while she opens up.

As soon as she sees who's out there, Allie takes a step back, and her spine straightens. "Kirsty. Hi."

A woman, with hair so white and shiny, she looks like she's wearing an old school helmet, breezes past Allie straight into the house.

Okay.

The doorbell has brought the rest of the men in this house out of hiding, and they assemble in the seating area as though the woman who just arrived conjured them with telepathy.

"Well, Allie certainly can't say I don't give her the best assignments." She peruses us through her dark-framed glasses with eyes that seem emptily blue. "I'm Kirsty. Allie's boss. I've come to check in on progress. This article is our cover feature, so it's hugely important." Allie's still at the door, holding it open for a man who lugs in two black bags and a camera tripod under his arm. "And, of course, we need some pictures of you all in action."

"I didn't sign up for photos," Russell says.

Kirsty waves her hand like she's swatting away a blowfly. "It's in the contract, darling."

Russell closes his eyes slowly and inhales a breath through flared nostrils. I didn't know there was a photo clause either, but then again, understanding contracts isn't my thing and I was more interested in getting paid for a week's vacation and anything else didn't really register.

"I think there's a way that whoever doesn't want to be in direct shots could be made comfortable," Oliver says, as though he has a say in this. The guy has an inherent sense of his own importance that is annoying, but I'm envious of.

"Yes," Kirsty says, deflating a little. "Of course. You can keep your baseball cap on and we can shoot you from behind. It's just so readers get a sense of the men we're featuring. A little mystery could add a lot to the allure." The last part is her rescuing herself from backtracking. Allie's mouth twitches.

Point one for Oliver. Russell's relieved, but I wonder how many of us can request the same concession.

Allie hovers behind Kirsty with a level of deference that doesn't suit her at all. This is her show, and she's sitting back and letting someone else come in and direct it. There's nothing worse than managers like this. They delegate, but only until the project is interesting enough for them to want to get involved again. Like, they leave the baking to someone else, and then want to come in to do the icing and flourishes.

Allie deserves to make the whole frickin' cake. She's going over and above on this project, although I don't think she's going to be transparent about just how far she is going.

"Jonathan," Kirsty calls, not bothering to look around to see where the cameraman actually is in the room. "Take a look around and let me know where you think the best shots can

be achieved. I want to maximize the glamor and luxury so that people associate that with the magazine.

Jonathan doesn't respond, but he begins exploring the place like a burglar on the hunt for jewels. Allie takes a few steps in his direction, but with one wave of Kirsty's hand, is stopped in her tracks. "Don't bother him. I want you to talk me through where you're up to, and what your plans are for the next few days."

Oliver stands, shoving his hands into his pockets, and Allie looks between him and Kirsty, waiting, although I'm not sure what for. There's a strange thick atmosphere that must puzzle the others in the group because Theron raises his eyebrows at Gabe, who shrugs, and Carson tips his head in Clay's direction, and he shrugs too. Then, as if it was all a weird blip in time, Allie heads to the stairs and Kirsty breezes after her.

Jonathan is quick to establish where he's going to shoot first, deciding the pool and the seating area are suitably luxurious to meet Kirsty's brief. Some of the guys disappear upstairs to tidy their appearances. Russell makes himself coffee and fries up a load of eggs, bacon, sausage and toast which he places on a huge platter, inviting everyone to help themselves. I dig in and try to make small talk with him, but it's tough. He's a one-word response kind of man who seems wound so tightly it's impossible to get him to relax. I've known guys like him before. Guys who carry invisible wounds from their time in service. Guys who don't want to open up to anyone about their experiences. I'm thankful that I've been open to my family's support and allowed them to steer me for help when I've needed it. I just hope that Russell will be able

to do the same at some point. Before we leave, I'll talk to him and try to make him see the benefit in being open.

Before Jonathan can begin taking photographs, he calls Kirsty to make sure she's happy. The boss appears, with a flushed but showered Allie trailing behind, clutching ten purple penises in her arms, and moves the photographer's tripod a total of three inches to the left. She then gives everyone instructions about how to pose while looking natural. I don't get the concept of fake natural posing. Why not just get us to have a good time and snap away?

It's awkward to see Allie grimacing behind Kirsty, as though everything she was hoping to achieve through this piece of work is being trampled by her boss's stiletto heels. It's worse to see how the photography process makes everyone stiffen and become competitive in a way they weren't before. Oliver somehow seems to avoid getting into almost every shot by taking a call, and then needing to use the bathroom. Kirsty doesn't seem to notice and by the time he's back, Jonathan is packing away his equipment and Kirsty is blathering on to Allie about ensuring she gets a first draft over to her before leaving the beach house.

I stay close because Allie seems wound up to the point of breaking. "And I've booked for you all to go to a club tonight," Kirsty says. She waves her hand around her like she's trying to fan away an unpleasant odor. This place is beautiful, but you're the only woman here. You need to see these men out with women they're attracted to, where they will really be in their element. A limousine will collect you all at 9 pm and will wait to bring you back. Dress to impress. Take some candid

shots. We might be able to use them to make the article appear fresh and edgy.”

Allie doesn't say anything in response, just drifts behind Kirsty as she strides in the direction of the exit.

By the time Kirsty has left in a cloud of overpriced perfume, and Jonathan has taken his strange, intense self out the door, I'm exhausted, and Allie looks wrung out.

She's the one to close the door, sealing us back into our sanctuary and the relief amongst the group is palpable.

“I don't like that woman,” Russell says. “I don't like her one little bit.”

“I don't think anyone does.” I rub my jaw, then shift my neck from side to side, loosening the muscles.

“She's okay.” Allie's hands are gripped tightly together in front of her and her shoulders are practically around her ears. Lying to protect someone so obviously shallow and unpleasant just shows how loyal Allie is.

Loyal and tense.

“What do you need from us right now?” I ask. “Your boss is really putting the pressure on. Do you need to ask us more questions? We can sit here while you work out what you need? We can relax by the pool and share in a more natural way...or...” I trail off, not knowing how to let her know that there's another option. I could massage away all that stress, or the three of us could fill her mind and body with other more pleasurable things than what she's buried under right now.

Whatever she needs is what I want to give her.

Whatever will bring back the sparkle to her eyes and the brightness to her smile.

I want to help her remember the goddess she is.

Allie tips her head to the ceiling and purses her lips around an exhalation that goes on too long. I glance at Gabe and Clay. We haven't had a chance to talk, but they know their number in the lineup. They know what happened last night. We don't have twin telepathy, but I'm hoping they'll get the hint I'm trying to convey through my intense stare and my raised brows.

Allie glances around at all of us, waiting expectantly, and her eyes are suddenly glassy. Shit, she's going to cry. There's no way she'll want to break in front of all of us because once she shows that vulnerability, she'll be on a different footing. All control and professionalism will be out of the window. Thankfully, I've stayed close to her side and in two strides, I pull her into my arms and rush to the stairs, praying I've done the right thing. She gasps with surprise but then buries her face into my chest, bringing her hand up to cover her eyes. The hitch of her chest against mine breaks my heart. Fucking hell. If I could get her stupid boss in a room, I'd tear her a new one.

Hushed, hurried conversation follows us, and two sets of footsteps thud against the wooden floor. I glance back to find Clay and Gabe, with matching worried expressions, following us to the upstairs level. My door is the closest, so that's where I take Allie, who's still shaking but has managed to get the crying under control. When I sit on the bed with her still in my arms, she doesn't look at me.

“Hey.” I brush her hair back from her face. “It’s okay. Everything’s okay.”

She struggles out of my embrace as Clay and Gabe stride through the door, filling the small room. Resting her hands on her thighs, Allie breathes in a few steadying breaths and then swipes at her damp cheeks. “I’m okay. Everything’s fine.”

“That woman’s a piece of work.” Clay’s usual easygoing smile is replaced by a scowl and, when he reaches out a hand to rest on Allie’s shoulder, she doesn’t recoil.

“Seriously, what was her deal?” Gabe asks.

“She doesn’t trust me. That’s her deal. She delegates, but then has to make sure that everything is being handled exactly as she would do it. There’s no room for me to have my own ideas. It’s like being a puppet on long strings. For a while, I can do things I want to do, then she yanks on the bar and I’m dangling all over again. It knocks the wind out of me.”

“She’s an idiot,” I tell her. “But hearing that probably doesn’t help.”

Allie runs her hands over her hair, the exasperation written in her every movement and expression. Focusing on me with her honey-colored eyes, she seems to soften. “It does help. Sometimes I feel like I’m going mad. Everyone in the office loves Kirsty. They’re always gushing over what an amazing boss she is. It’s not just me she’s like this with and I don’t understand. She’s the one who hired the whole team, but she never lets us do our jobs. I know I’m a great writer and what she makes me do to my work reduces its quality.”

“I’m sure it does.” I reach out to take her hand, tugging her closer. “Maybe that’s what it is. Maybe she’s threatened by you.”

She shakes her head too quickly, an instinctive reaction before her expression becomes thoughtful. “I never looked at it like that.”

“Maybe she wants to be able to claim some of your achievements for herself, so she doesn’t have to admit you could do her job in a heartbeat.” I’ve read five of Allie’s articles. I know how great she is at making even the smuttiest topics thought provoking and eloquent. I know her potential even if she doesn’t. I know what it’s like to be browbeaten by other people who don’t consider the impact of their harsh words or their manipulative behavior. I’ve worked for controlling assholes who’d demolish a man who stepped out of line, even if the line was drawn in the wrong stretch of sand.

“I just...I hate getting so frustrated.”

I rise and pull her into an embrace, stroking my hands across her back over and over. She melts against me, and Gabe and Clay watch with concern etched into their frowns. I make eye contact again, trying to ask the same question. What can we offer her to make her feel better? I’m met with two shrugs that match my own uncertainty. It might not be the right moment for this, but without asking, how will we know?

Then her hands trail up my back and down my sides in a way that feels like exploration.



Sex shouldn't be about dealing with the stresses of life, but it does a good job of wiping it away, even for just a while. Allie turns her face and presses a soft kiss to my chest, and the need to ask her what she wants drifts away. She's telling me, in her own way, with a gentle touch that gives me insight into what she needs. I bend to kiss her forehead where the hair on her hairline rests in little wisps and curls. She smells of the ocean and the sunshine, fresh like a day at the beach. The soft sound she makes at the back of her throat tickles the back of my neck. All her tiny movements set off an awareness in me that I've never felt before. This woman who I hardly know brings out instincts in me that I've buried for a long time.

The instinct to protect. The instinct to nurture and support.

Gabe steps forward, reaching out to rest his hand on Allie's back and she turns into this touch, her hand searching for him. She slides easily into his embrace too, making the same soft sounds. Clay hangs back but Allie reaches out her hand again, searching for contact with him, too.

The loss of her warmth leaves me aching, but she's not gone for long. Somehow, she brings us all close, crowding her as she moves between us.

She wants this.

It's totally clear.

She fits between us like it's always been this way.

It's Clay who moves on a step, grasping the hem of her shirt and lifting it over her head. Gabe eases her shorts down from behind and I step in to unfasten her bra. When the cool air

hits her breasts, she moans, and it's like a lick over the sensitive skin of my balls.

Before anyone touches her, I twist her until she's looking at me, grasping her face between my hands. "We're going to make you feel good," I say. "If you want us to."

A kiss pressed to my lips is her answer. It's a kiss that's firm and laced with the same kind of ache that burns inside me.

Gabe's hands reach around her body, gripping her breasts and twisting her nipples and she arches her back, staring into my eyes as she lets him pleasure her, and as I watch, the arousal that pools in my cock is at war with the strangeness of this experience.

I want this for Allie. I want what she wants because I know she needs to feel in control...to feel free.

But this isn't something I've ever experienced before and being able to handle sharing a woman with two other men is going to take some getting used to.



## CLAY

I had a feeling this was going to happen. After Carson encouraged last night's antics, I wondered where Allie would want to go next. Either she was going to be filled with regret and call the whole damned thing off or go further. Carson's always been like that. The instigator. My mom thought he was a troublemaker, but throughout my whole life, he's helped me find the confidence to do the things I never thought I'd do. I guess Tom and Gabe wondered too because it only took one look from Tom for us to end up here, surrounding Allie while she whimpers for more.

And more she's going to get.

Her body is so sweet. Creamy skin, kissed by the sun. Natural breasts tipped with tight rosy nipples. A belly that's soft and hips that curve. Thighs that could cradle me perfectly while I drive inside her.

This won't be the first time I've shared a woman, but it's the first time I've done it with men I don't know well. The first time that there's so many unknown elements.

While Gabe touches her and Tom kisses her, I tug my shirt over my head, tossing it onto the green chair in the corner. This room is almost a mirror image of mine, except Tom keeps his space tidy with military precision. I could bounce a coin on his bed and it would hit the ceiling.

Allie twists in Gabe's arms, seeking me. Her eyes drift over my naked torso, lingering on the ink there, a twist of jungle

leaves and branches, interspersed with animals. The colorful images are so different from Carson's ink. Unlike him, I'm not trying to exorcise demons through my art, just celebrate the parts of the world I have a passion for.

Allie's cool hand over the tiger's face on my left pec is like a balm that calms my racing heart, and when she steps closer for a kiss, everything inside me seems to stall. Damn, her lips are like strawberries and cream. They tease even as they submit, and I'm dizzy with her. Dizzy and frantic. Without thinking about the others surrounding us, I grab beneath her ass and hoist her against me until her pussy is resting against the rigid bar of my cock and her legs are high around my waist. If we were alone, I'd fuck her against the wall in this very position, plundering, ravishing, thinking nothing about what either of us would feel after we were satisfied.

But the others are here and getting her onto the bed will give us all more access to explore her from head to toe.

Kneeling on the edge of the mattress, I lay her down and yank her panties down her hips. She won't need those for a while. In fact, I think we should add a rule to this thing we have going on with Allie. I think that her underwear should be banned until we leave the beach house. The image of her walking around in her short skirts and dresses with nothing underneath makes me so fucking hard my head spins.

Tasting her becomes a necessity rather than a desire and the first swipe of my tongue through her sweetness is like a hit of the most addictive drug. Oh fuck. I lap at her entrance, famished for her, and she wriggles, grasping my head, and snapping her thighs around my ears.

“Shit,” Gabe mutters as he climbs onto the bed on her right side. “That’s so fucking hot.” Tom does the same on the left and Allie, even in her ecstasy, grabs for each of them. Gabe kisses her, then drifts to suck her nipple, his hand squeezing her pliable flesh. Tom takes her hand and kisses her wrist, her knuckles, then sucks each finger into his mouth, which makes her gasp. My tongue gets to work on her clit, flicking and circling, flicking and circling until I have to press my hand over her stomach to keep her in place.

“Please,” she whimpers. “Please.” I don’t know who she’s talking to or what she’s begging for specifically, but Tom pulls a box of condoms out of his nightstand and tosses a foil packet to me. Fuck. Is she really pleading for my cock?

I tear the packet with my teeth like one of the predators on my chest, a wild animal ready to claim his prey. My hands shake as I shove the rubber over my cock, staring at the pussy spread open in front of me. Allie’s arousal is visible, slicking her entrance, her clit swollen and straining for contact.

The image of Jimmy spreading her open in front of us last night flashes into mind and I have to get inside her. Watching him fuck her almost blew my mind, and seeing her whimper when Gabe and Tom touch her makes my arousal feel so much sharper. Knocking her legs wider with my knees, I brace over her body, gripping my cock by the root. Her glazed eyes try to focus between us as I probe, putting just the right pressure to breach and then penetrate, and...oh...my...god. It’s perfection. Tight and slick and deep, I have to throw my head back and focus on the light fittings above us, so I don’t come in a second.

Gabe has stripped and now Tom is too, and although it should feel weird to be in a room with two other naked men, it doesn't. Allie can't stop looking at us all, her eyes trailing over all the tan skin and taut muscles, pupils blown so wide that barely any of the sweet honey color of her irises is visible. She reaches for Gabe's cock, wrapping her small hand around his girth. Her fingers don't quite reach around, but that doesn't seem to matter. The groan he makes as she pumps his dick is primal.

Tom grips his own dick, watching as I move inside her, rolling my hips and withdrawing almost fully with each thrust. Every time I bury deep, she groans, and the urge to growl with the building feeling of pleasure is a desperate clawing thing. It becomes even more desperate when she reaches for Tom and encourages him to bring his cock to her lips.

I pause, gasping air deep into my lungs, watching Allie suck on Tom's huge dick. Her cheek moves as he cants his hips back and forth, her wide eyes are fixed on his. Her hand still works Gabe who's watching the action too, thrusting into Allie's palm. I slick the pad of my thumb over my tongue and press it to Allie's clit, loving the way it makes her buck onto my cock. She wants me to thrust, and I can't remain still any longer.

When I push deep, she groans around Tom's cock and he grasps her by the hair, the sensation becoming too much. It's becoming too much for me too, but it's Tom who comes first, warning Allie so she can pull away, but she doesn't. Oh fuck, she doesn't. She swallows it all down like the good girl she is.

And then her body seizes. Shit, she clamps tight around me, rippling and rippling like the water after a stone is dropped,

and I can't take it anymore.

I'm over the edge, struck by an orgasm that feels like it burns me from the inside out...a bolt of lightning that stiffens my spine and contorts my features until I'm roaring and groaning.

Fuck.

It's too much. I flop forward, bracing over Allie so I don't crush her. She cups my face, and I kiss her clavicle and then lower in the space between her breasts where her heart beats staccato against my lips.

Conscious that Gabe is the only one who hasn't come yet, I shift to the side and give him a nod. He's a big, stocky guy with the shovel hands of a working man, but he touches Allie with reverence. "Are you okay?" he whispers, which I guess is code for "Are you okay to keep going?"

She nods as he kisses down her body, dwelling on places that I didn't worship; the skin where her waist flares into her hips, her navel, the strip of soft skin above the sweet curls between her thighs. His deep tanned skin is such a contrast to hers and she moans with each kiss he gives her.

Tom rests on his knees, still panting from his orgasm, and I take Gabe's place so I can watch, cupping my already hardening cock.

When Gabe begins to kiss down Allie's thighs, he pushes his arm beneath her and in a quick motion, flips her onto her belly. In no rush, he licks the little divots above her ass and lower, until she's writhing against his tongue. Her hands reach



out for me and Tom, holding on as Gabe pulls her onto her knees and ravishes her pussy from behind.

Allie's face is buried in the sheets, her hair a tangled mess that's half in her bun and half out. I rest my hand on her shoulder, and trail lower, relishing the softness of her skin and the movement of her ribs as she pants from Gabe's technique. Tom must have given him a condom because he somehow managed to sheath himself with one hand while making Allie groan, then he's climbing behind her, looming like a barbarian warlord, gripping her hips and lining himself up for entry.

And damn.

The size of his dick is like a mirror of mine - it's why we're here after all - but somehow what he's about to push inside Allie seems more violent when it's attached to him.

Her body is so small and sweet, and his cock looks like it's going to wedge itself between her lungs, but I know she can take it. Her body stretched to adapt to me with no problem, despite her inexperience.

Her body seems to be able to accept us all, but that's not all this is about now. It's about so much more.

Maybe I'm the only one with these developing feelings. Maybe I'm the only one looking at Allie and this situation and wondering what it would be like to never have to return to my old life.

I want to get trapped here, in this dream, where the only thing we have to worry about is where our next meal is coming from, and who's going to rock our girl's world next.

The only problem with dreams is that they're temporary.

In a few days, we're all going to have to wake up, and what happens then?



## ALLIE

I don't recognize the woman on her knees on a bed surrounded by three men. I don't understand how in such a short amount of time, all my anxiety surrounding sex, my reservations and insecurities, could be washed away.

This new version of me doesn't wait for offers.

She takes.

She believes she deserves all the pleasure there is and lets that pleasure into her life.

I grip hard on Tom's and Clay's hands, feeling Gabe behind me, his cock pressed at my entrance.

He's big and thick. So thick. And his hands have that delicious roughness that sets my nerve endings fluttering like a cascade of butterflies. He's going to fuck me in front of these men. He's going to own me, so I don't have to think about anything outside of this room. I can hand my body over to them all and they will take care of all my needs. I can just float away on the sensations and leave Kirsty's suggestions and the stupid undermining attitude she has behind me.

I can pretend there's nothing except this.

No money worries. No parents stressing that I'm always so far from where I need to be. No sad apartment devoid of life and fun.

I can be this carefree woman whose sole purpose is to be a vessel of pleasure for these men who seem to want to take

care of me, whether it's physically or emotionally.

I don't have to feel alone.

"Ready?" Gabe's practically halfway inside me by the time he asks the question, and the slick way he penetrates me should make it obvious just how ready I am. But I answer yes on a groan, and Tom and Clay grip my hands tighter, sensing I need the extra contact to ground me.

The power behind Gabe's thrusts rocks me up the bed, despite the fact he's gripping my hips and tugging me back into him each time. It's as though he's been waiting for this moment and now, we're joined in the most intimate of ways, he's losing all control.

"Fuck. I'm in all the way," he gasps.

"She's deep, huh?"

Gabe moans his agreement and I love his power and the way he's so comfortable unleashing it. Every bruising press of his fingers makes me feel safe. Every slap of his body against mine is soothing, as much as it is devastating. He wrecks my body until we're slick where his thighs meet mine, and the moans leaking from my lips sound unhinged.

"It's okay," Tom soothes. "It's okay."

"I can't," I moan. "I can't come again...it's...it's too much."

"You can," Gabe says, placing two thick fingers on either side of my clit and pressing with each thrust.

"Oh fuck," I gasp, not believing how well he can read my body, not understanding how he knows just the right contact and pressure to bring me closer and closer. Clay's fingers play

with my hair, and stroke down my spine, and I want to purr like a cat for the blissful attention these men are giving me.

I always believed that group sex would feel like violent exploitation. Something only men would truly enjoy, but I was so wrong.

I'm at the center of their universe and rather than these men using me, it feels like the other way around. They're servicing my needs, working to make me feel good, and along the way, they take their own pleasure.

For the second time, a hook drags my insides higher and higher until I feel like I'm on the brink of dissolving back into the ether, and then Gabe uses the very tip of his index finger to touch my clit and I'm gone. Falling. Falling. Lights flashing behind my eyes like a neon explosion and he's releasing, too. I can't breathe. I can't think.

It's too much and somehow perfect all at the same time.

"That's it," Tom says, taking my hand to his mouth and kissing my knuckles. His beard rasps at my skin as such a contrast to his soft lips.

Gabe collapses behind me, his big cock slipping out in a whoosh that takes my breath away. I'm so swollen and slick that it feels as though he's turned me inside out.

I'm weak with pleasure and sleepy too, so when Tom gathers me into his arms and holds me close, I sink into his body with a grateful sigh. Listening to his heartbeat and gentle breathing lulls me into a sleep I didn't expect.

When I wake, he's sleeping too, still propped up on the pillows. I turn, searching for the others, but they're both

gone. I guess the bed wasn't big enough for four adults to take a post-coital nap.

As I stir, Tom shifts too. I'm so warm in his arms that our skin has stuck together, and when I glance down, I find that we're both still completely naked. Our eyes meet and he smiles so broadly and openly that my heart flutters. "Now this is what I should be waking up to everyday," he says.

"A girl with tangled hair and morning..." I glance at my watch. "Afternoon breath."

"A beautiful woman with a satisfied look on her face."

He's right about at least one part of that. I think I reached a Richter scale of orgasm that was previously unknown to womankind.

"I just..." My mouth runs away with me before I can even consider what's bubbling on my tongue. "I don't know what came over me."

Tom presses his finger against my lips. "Don't do that," he says. "Don't try to explain away the urge to do something that you wanted and needed. None of us has any kind of negative opinion about your participation in what we did. We're four consenting adults and epic sex isn't something any of us are regretting."

"I didn't ask you if you wanted it," I say. "I just started something, and you guys followed."

"We happily trailed after you like happy puppies, and if you'd asked us, we would have all said yes, yes, and more yes."

I rub my face, relieved to hear that the men I seduced weren't just going along with it because they felt sorry for me. The embarrassment I felt about crying over Kirsty rears up with fresh prickles behind my eyes.

"Your boss is an asshole," Tom says, as though he read my mind. "You need to get out from under her as soon as you can."

"It's not as easy as that," I say.

"For you, it absolutely should be."

Bless him for having so much confidence, but it feels wasted on me. Compliments have always been hard to hear, I guess because my parents were always so hard on me. Only perfect scores were acceptable. The money they spent on my education had to be reflected in my performance. I can thank them for my work ethic and also a whole slew of hangups and issues. I roll out of Tom's arms, slide off the bed and begin to search for my clothes.

As I'm pulling on my panties, perched on the edge of the mattress, he slides his arms around me. My first thought is that he's searching for more sex, but he kisses my neck and then stops. Our eyes meet in the mirror over the console table, and he smiles.

"This article you're writing...I know it's not what you really want to write, but you can still make it epic. The subject matter might be smutty and the question you're investigating might be cliché, but you can make it meaningful. And we're here to help. You have ten men at your disposal, willing to bare our souls so that you can get to the content that's going



to make this assignment a knockout. Use us. And not just for sex. Use us like steps on a ladder and climb high, Allie.”

I gulp as the wave of emotions his words have elicited threaten to swamp me. It already feels like I’m taking too much from them, expecting too much, but I know that if I say those words, Tom will deny it.

It’s crazy that in all my years, I’ve never met even one man who measures up to anyone in this house. Every assumption I made about the kind of men they would be based on the reason they were recruited has been wrong.

Every expectation has been incorrect.

But what will it mean, when seven days disappear like sand between our fingers and this glitch in time is over?



## ALLIE

“Anyone else feel like a kid on his way to prom?” Jonas shifts to squint through the tinted window of the limousine. I know exactly what he means. The last time I rode in a car like this, I was on my way to prom with my date and my friends, dressed in a ridiculous floaty number that my mom insisted I wear, and dreading the kiss my date was going to expect at some point.

“Me,” I admit.

A few other men agree.

“I bet you and Stefan ride around in these all the time.” Clay tips his glass of whisky in Oliver’s direction.

“Not all the time.”

The driver drops the glass divider and tells us we’ll be arriving in five minutes. The club has our names on a guest list, which is a relief because trying to get in with so many men would likely be an issue.

I sip my glass of champagne to try and wash away some of the butterflies currently unsettling my belly. I haven’t danced in a long time, and we’ve never been out in public as a group. There are a lot of elements that make me anxious.

By the time we’re dropped at the curb, I’m already tipsy and much more relaxed. My gold strappy heels are over three inches high, but I’m still dwarfed by the men around me. I stagger slightly and Clay immediately wraps an arm around

me, tugging me close. "Careful, princess," he says. "You don't want to twist an ankle."

"That's the least of our worries," Theron grumbles. "That dress she's wearing..." He shakes his head, focusing on the gold lame one shouldered mini dress I chose for tonight's outing.

"What about the dress?" I say defensively.

"You look smoking hot. He's worried you're going to get ravished in there."

Gabe reaches out to touch the fabric, which has a liquid quality. "It's like fish skin."

"Way to make me feel sexy," I say.

"If you don't know how sexy you look, you need your eyes tested." Jonas slides his arm through mine and tugs me out of Clay's embrace, striding up to the doorman with a clipboard. "We should be on the guest list," he says confidently. "Fine Line Magazine, party of eleven."

The bouncer, who would give The Rock a run for his money, grimaces at me, clicking his pen before he turns his attention to count the other men. "Ten men and one woman," he says, raising a bushy black eyebrow.

"Yep." I smile cheerfully, the alcohol filling me with liquid joy that makes me want to giggle. Folding my lips, I try to keep my laughter inside in case The Hulk's big brother takes issue with me.

Finding everyone dressed impeccably to the glamorous dress code, he unhooks the rope barrier and allows us to make our way inside.

The music is so loud, the floor vibrates under my feet and my hair shifts in time to the beat. We bypass the coatroom and Jonas holds my arm tightly as we emerge into the wide central area of Club Onyx. It's huge and starkly decorated, and the darkness of the black walls, floor and ceiling contrasts with the shiny white marble bar which extends across the whole back wall and is packed four-deep with thirsty clubbers. In the center, a huge black and silver chandelier hangs over the dancing throng. Purple and white lights pulse in time to the beat and before I have a chance to adjust to my surroundings, Jonas tugs me onto the dancefloor.

In seconds, we're engulfed by the crowd but then Jimmy, Clay, Gabe, Stefan and Tom join us and I'm safely surrounded by six huge men. "Where are the rest?" I shout in Jimmy's ear.

"At the bar, buying drinks."

"And pretending they don't hate dancing," Gabe says.

I laugh, trying to imagine Theron and Russell taking to the dance floor. The truth is, I can't.

"The only dancing Theron ever does is Greek."

"We need to get him to demonstrate when we're home," Tom laughs.

The music shifts to something with a rising melody and I throw my arms in the air, close my eyes and let it take me away. Hands grip my waist; thighs press against my ass. When I open my eyes, I'm sandwiched between Jonas and Jimmy, and it's a damned good place to be. "You're fire, you know that?" Jonas tells me. "Fire." He touches my arm and whips his hand back with a hissing sound.

“And you’re a douche,” Jimmy jokes in response, slapping him on the forehead.

It’s been such a long time since I danced, and even longer since I danced with a man. Now I have two gorgeous men pressed close and another four looking on with hungry eyes. And somewhere in this club, there’s four on top of that buying drinks.

Being out with them all for the first time makes me realize how hard it must be when teachers take their classes on field trips. I feel like I need to do a quick headcount to make sure I haven’t lost anyone along the way.

“I need a drink,” I say, flushing from the density of dancers around us and all their body heat.

“The lady needs a drink,” Tom yells, and more than a few strangers glance in our direction. This time, it’s Jimmy who guides me with a territorial hand on the top of my ass. If he slides it any lower, I’ll lose the ability to walk.

Appreciative eyes follow us, from men and women. By the bar, I catch a group of women in their early twenties gathered around Carson, Oliver, Theron and Russell. I’m caught off guard at the unexpected competition, remembering Kirsty’s words, and stop feet away, suddenly feeling like I’m intruding.

What was I thinking, imagining they’d all want to spend the evening with me when there are so many other pretty girls here tonight? That was the point of coming to the club, after all. It’s why Kirsty’s paid for all this. I get to see the men interacting and flirting with other women. The thought makes me want to scratch out their eyeballs. Jonas rests his hands on

my upper arms and whispers in my ear, “what are you waiting for?”

I shake my head, unable to explain that seeing the others with women tears me up inside. I turn and he gazes down at me, searching my expression. “Don’t worry.” He touches my cheek. “There isn’t another woman in here who compares to you. Your boss might want us to flirt, but none of us wants that. We’re here with you, okay?”

“You don’t owe me anything,” I say. “We have an arrangement, but it’s not exclusive.”

“It is to me. And the rest of them feel the same.” He doesn’t add the words ‘for now’, but I hear them anyway.

When I turn back to the men at the bar, they’ve sent the girls packing, and I can’t believe it. As I approach, the retreating girls stare in my direction and talk behind their hands, but I brush past to where Theron and Russell have accumulated a line of drinks so wide and long, it’s drawn the focus of all the bartenders.

“Why so many?” I ask, lifting a yellow cocktail from the shiny bar and taking a long pull from the straw. It’s something with pineapple and coconut and rum, maybe. A pina colada.

“I don’t like waiting at bars,” Theron says. “I’d rather buy in bulk.”

I dread to think how much what looks like over thirty drinks have cost him, but then I remember we have a tab. “Did you use the tab?” I ask.

Theron shoots me a one-sided grin. “As much as I like paying my own way in life, tonight is on Fine Line.”

I grab another drink, this time a bright pink one, and gulp it. “Mmmm...grapefruit,” I gasp, as the sourness cuts through the sweet.

“I got one of every cocktail on the menu.”

“I told him to get beers,” Russell says. “We’re going to get shitfaced drinking all these different liquors.”

Theron shoves a bright blue cocktail that looks radioactive into Russell’s nearest hand. “Suck on that.”

Much to my amusement, Russell stares at the cocktail for a second, then grabs the two yellow straws and the shiny tassel on a stick and knocks back the drink in three large gulps, gasping when he’s done.

“Shit, that’s colder than a witch’s tit!”

“But good, huh?”

Theron seems pleased with himself, but I’m still laughing at the witch’s tit description, and the two cocktails I’ve consumed in two minutes have made my head spin.

I reach for another, and Oliver takes my hand before I get hold of the glass. “Maybe it’s time to slow down a little,” he says. “I’ll get you some water, so you don’t have a hangover tomorrow.”

It’s my instinct to push back because I hate it when other people make decisions for me. I’m not a kid anymore, with parents who force me into doing stupid stuff that I hate. I don’t have to eat all my broccoli when I think it tastes like farts or go to bed at nine pm when all my friends are allowed to stay up until ten thirty.



But Oliver seems genuinely concerned, and I feel buzzy and weird and out of control. It's not a good feeling.

I concede to Mr. Sensible's suggestion. "Water would be great. Thank you."

He signals to the bartender and a bottle of cool, spring water is delivered in record time, next to a glass with ice and a slice of lemon. He pours and I gulp it down gratefully.

"You know, I think I need to use the bathroom."

"I'll take you," Oliver says.

This time I hold my hand up and insist. "I'm okay, thanks. I can make it on my own."

His tightly braced shoulders and thinned lips make his feelings obvious, but he doesn't challenge me and when Theron asks him where I'm going, he holds him back from following.

*Good*, I mutter under my breath. *He's learning.*

The bathrooms are all black including the sinks and toilets, and the lights are muted, so it's a bit like walking into a tomb. I pee, and then wash my hands, squinting into the mirror to check my makeup. It's so dark, I can barely see my face. Definitely designed by a man.

"You're the girl with all the best-looking men," the girl next to me says. I turn and recognize her as one of the group who were rejected.

"All the best men," I slur. The water was a good idea, but it hasn't done anything to reduce my giddiness.

"Which one's your boyfriend?" she asks.

“All of them.” I turn and face her full on, one of my ankles tipping to the side and then straightening. Damn, I’m a mess. “I saw you looking at them and trying to talk to them, but you should know...” I point at her like I’m jabbing a doorbell. “... that you can look but you can’t touch cos they’re all mine.”

She stares at me like I grew another head. “You’re saying you have ten boyfriends? Ten?”

“Yeah.” I shake my wet hands, widening my stance. “Ten awesome boyfriends with amazing bodies and pretty faces and tattoos and big dicks!”

I almost fall forward when I open my hands to illustrate just how big. I’m a mess, but I don’t care. She’s going to learn that the men out there are strictly off limits.

“And they all want you?” She arches one eyebrow like a character out of Mean Girls and for the first time in my life, I get the urge to slap someone hard. But I don’t because I’m a grown adult and even though I’m drunk, I know what being grown-up means.

“Yeah. They want all of this.” I smooth my hands over my curves, starting to feel ridiculous. What am I going to do next? Jerk my head from side to side and wave my hand? This is not me. “Anyway. I need to go.”

My feet are weird in my shoes, and I feel like I’m walking on the moon with giant awkward strides. Oliver was right about those drinks. They’ve hit my bloodstream and now I’m wasted.

In the club, the sudden flashing lights catch me off guard and I stumble, grabbing for the wall to stabilize myself.

Instead, I find my fingers gripping the white shirt of a big dude with long flowing black hair and eyes as dark as Satan's boudoir.

"Hey," he says, hooking an arm around my waist and resting his hand over the crack of my ass. "Are you looking for a good time?" The fabric of my dress is thin and I'm wearing a thong. One of his thick fingers presses in between my cheeks.

Ugh. I push against his chest, wriggling to get away from him, but he's strong. "Hey...you don't need to go anywhere, pretty girl. I've got what you need right here." He forces me closer against his body, so his cock digs into my belly. My stomach roils and my heart starts to pound in panic. I don't want this greasy man with his weird shiny trousers and wrestling hair. I want my guys.

"Let me go," I say, pushing again.

Before I have a chance to say another word, a big arm encircles me from behind and pulls me roughly from his grasp. I'm spun into Clay's arms as Jimmy grabs the man by his collar and pushes him against the wall. I'm suddenly surrounded by everyone, and all of them are focused on the grabby perv, forcing me behind them so I'm shielded from what might happen.

"It's okay," I shout, trying to grab for Jimmy. I know he's a fighter and he could take that dude out with ease, but I don't want any of them getting hurt because I can't handle my booze and am too stubborn to let them take care of me.

"It's not okay. He had his hands all over you," Theron growls.

Carson's behind Jimmy, his tattooed fists balled, and I struggle against Clay's grip again. If something happens to any of them, I'll never forgive myself.

"Leave it, please," I yell.

The man struggles against Jimmy's grip, and I close my eyes, unable to watch, but then someone brushes past me and I blink, finding Oliver leading the bouncer over to deal with the situation. "This man was groping that girl. She was struggling to get away," Oliver explains with perfect diction. In situations like this, usually the bouncer gets everyone involved to leave, but Oliver seems to have a way with him and only the handsy creep is led to the exit.

Jimmy has murder in his eyes, and Carson and Theron are still braced for violence.

I feel terrible for bringing a fun evening crashing down, but then Stefan, Russell and Tom arrive clutching the remaining cocktails. They hand them out and Jonas claps Jimmy on the shoulder for his speed and restraint, Clay grabs Carson by the neck, joking about how scrappy he used to be when he was a kid, and Gabe pats Theron's upper arm, agreeing with him when he growls about what an asshole the guy was. Between them all, the situation is diffused, the mood is lifted, and somehow, we end up back on the dance floor, cutting loose and laughing. It turns into the best night I've ever had because the company is so awesome. Even Russell lets his hair down, and he doesn't have any! And Theron manages some moves that are a weird fusion of Greek and drunk modern but none of it matters because we're flying and happy and together.

Out of the corner of my eye, when I'm sandwiched between Tom and Clay, I catch the eye of the woman from the bathroom and wink.

*My men, I growl internally. Mine.*

In my drunken state, everything seems clear.



# JONAS

The sky is crystal blue; the sun beating down with an intensity that feels uncomfortable against my skin but great for my muscles and bones. The run I did this morning to sweat out the alcohol from last night was good, but I'm used to exercising on and off all day, and lying around relaxing doesn't sit well with me.

My clients keep texting me, asking if I can fit them in for a booking, even though my website clearly states I'm on vacation. That's the thing with rich people. They believe their wants and needs are above everyone else's. If they need to get into shape, they expect me to be available.

Well, fuck them. Fuck them all. This week is mine.

"Allie." Theron's voice cuts through the quiet, and I raise my head, squinting through my aviators, looking for the girl in question.

She squints into the sunshine, propping herself up against the frame of the huge sliding doors, sipping on a soda in a large engraved glass. I've gotten used to the crazy colors she wears and the bright pink kimono thing currently concealing her body suits her to a T. I'm not big on understanding women's fashion, but the robe slash dress is short and nips in at the waist, showing off her gorgeous legs and hinting at the curves beneath.

I didn't realize that sex could make a woman sexier, but in Allie's case, it really has. Or maybe it's just the ridiculous

amount of sleep she's had today. I don't think Kirsty anticipated how much interview time would be taken up with hangover recovery. Tom appears behind her, sipping his own drink, and dips his head to kiss her neck. His lips must be cold because she turns with shock and laughs brightly. He's generally a happy guy, but after fucking Allie, he looks like he might float away on his euphoria.

And I'm next.

It sounds kind of fucked up in my head. I've never experienced anything like this before. Knowing I'm going to be intimate with a woman I haven't kissed, anticipating sex with someone who's already fucking other people. And I don't know if it's because of the anticipation, or the sex discussions we've been having, or if it's just because I'm horny and my body's all warm and relaxed, but I really want to fuck this girl. I mean, really. We danced like we were fucking last night at the club, and it took all of my self-control to send her to bed alone.

She chose my vibrator to use on herself.

That fact alone has provided images for my spank bank.

And my ego. I'm not used to being chosen, to being anyone's priority. I'm used to waiting in line and hoping I'll get my fair share.

How weird is it that she's had my dick inside her already, just a version not attached to me?

I consider getting my lazy ass up off this sunbed and going caveman like Tom and Jimmy. They carried her up those stairs with one thing on their minds. But she had three men



yesterday. Three men who are big in all areas. Could she take another so soon?

And there are four of us left so maybe she's hoping we'll make it a fivesome. Virgin to group sex in a couple of days is serious progress. Our pretty innocent girl is down with letting her kinky side out of the box, that's for sure.

I'm down with kinky. I'm down with anything as long as it involves getting between Allie's warm thighs and making her scream my name.

But what will she be down with? And how the hell do I find out?

*Make her laugh*, my internal voice whispers. It's my go-to approach for every situation I don't feel that certain of. I know Allie likes it when I joke around because her laugh is the prettiest, and her smile can illuminate a whole room. It's one of the things that has all of us mesmerized and the crazy thing is, I don't think she has any idea of the power she has.

I'm up before Theron has a chance to muscle in. Even if Allie isn't up for our date - and I use the word date loosely - at least we can spend some time together.

I saunter over to Allie, suppressing a smile as she watches me with wide blown pupils. "Have you recovered from last night? Are you ready for some more fun?"

She tips her head to the side, letting her eyes wander over all my semi-nakedness in a way I never would have imagined her doing when we first met. She's developed so much confidence in such a short space of time. "I think I'll be ready for some more fun later," she says, touching her hand to her

temple and wincing. "Maybe now I can interview you. We can share the hot tub and talk."

"Sounds good to me." I let my eyes wander over her body unabashedly. "Do you have your suit on under there?" She gives just one shoulder a shrug and steps out of the house, her perfumed scent wafting past as she turns her head to keep me in her line of sight.

I follow, totally mesmerized, as if she's the Pied Piper and I'm her subject. Except, Allie isn't feeding me false promises. She wants me close. She wants us to be alone. She's not choosing the fivesome where I'd be just one dick among many.

The hot tub is set away from the main pool area in a more secluded space edged by tall green shrubbery tipped with bright pink flowers that match Allie's outfit. She pads slowly across the tiled floor, her feet bare, still clutching her drink and phone. As her hips sway, I lick my lips. Maybe, if she's not ready to go all the way, we can find some other interesting ways to pass the time.

The hot tub has a cover which I unfasten as Allie takes the tie around her kimono and loosens it. My eyes drift from the task at hand as she slips the knot open and allows the fabric to part. I bite my bottom lip as her soft, tan flesh is revealed, tantalizing inch by inch.

I thought the shrug she gave me about her outfit was a tease, but as Allie slides off her outfit, she really is wearing nothing underneath, and damn if my dick doesn't stiffen so quickly, I almost fall headfirst into the tub. Jeez, she's got everything going on. Tight pink nipples and perky natural

breasts, a sweet nipped-in waist and cute curve to her belly that so many of my clients work to get rid of, but it's actually my favorite part to kiss. And lower, the apex of her thighs taunts me with its nearness.

If Allie thinks we can hang out naked in this hot tub discussing my cock without anything happening, she must be crazy.

The tent in my shorts is comical, and her eyes drift to take a good look before her eyebrows raise.

"Do you mind if I record our conversation?" She holds out the phone and I stare at it like it's an unexploded hand grenade. Or a giant cock block.

"I'm fine with you recording anything you want."

My mind drifts back to my fantasies of her using my rubber dick replica to make herself come while I watch. It would have been nice, but sex in the hot tub would be nicer.

"Okay." She climbs the steps until her ass can rest on the side of the hot tub and she swivels so her legs are in the water. I press the button to start the jets and join her, keeping my shorts on. She wants to interview me, and I need half a hope of holding myself back from slipping into her tight, wet heat.

When she's pressed a few buttons, she turns to me, tucking damp stray locks of hair behind her ears. Her tits bob high in the water, drawing my attention until she clears her throat. "How are you finding this experience?" she asks.

"Interesting," I say. "I mean, I was hoping to answer some questions and enjoy a paid vacation, so I guess the experience

is living up to expectations.”

“That’s good to hear.” Allie rests her head back against the hot tub’s wooden sides, tipping her face to the sky. “This place really is spectacular.”

“It is,” I agree. Oh god. Her tits move higher and those nipples that make my mouth water peek just out of the water.

I think she’s trying to kill me.

“Tell me what you like about sex.” Her hand drifts across the water like a caress, coming to rest against the edge like she’s bracing herself.

“Everything,” I say. “The chase before. The seduction. The moment she agrees, either verbally or physically. The first time I see her naked. The first stroke of my tongue between her legs where I get that hit of her taste and smell that makes my head go woozy.”

I lick the moisture from my lips and grip the edge of the hot tub, my knuckles whitening as I attempt to hold myself apart from Allie. “Her submission. Her moans. The notch of my cock between her legs. Feeling how wet she is. Shoving myself into all that tightness. The race of my heart. The instinct that rears up into my hips. The way my mind spins as pleasure gets closer. The heat in my lower back, the buzz in my balls. Her frenzy as she chases release. Her moans and loss of control. The surge of pleasure that makes me weak for just a second.”

When I’ve finished, I finally look in her direction and find her staring at me, lips parted, eyes dark with arousal. “Wow.”

I smirk at the evidence that I’ve stolen her breath. “Yeah. Wow. That’s exactly what I think about sex.”

She clears her throat. "And what about your dick. What do you think about it?"

"I love my dick, just like I love every part of me. We're like a well-oiled machine. I keep fit so that I can use my body exactly the way I want to use it, and my dick does everything he needs to do to keep up his end of the bargain!"

She laughs softly, trailing a hand over the water. "What's the worst part about having a big dick?"

"There isn't one. I mean, sometimes condoms are too tight, but it doesn't bother me."

"What about underwear and clothing? What about sleeping positions?"

"All fine," I say. "I'm just an all-round contented guy and my dick is pretty happy most of the time, too."

"Most of the time?"

"Yeah. Well, he's feeling neglected right now. And tormented. But I think you know that."

I drop my head to the right, narrowing my eyes and folding in my lips. Allie's grin confirms her intentions.

"How do you feel about sharing me with the other men?" she asks. "Is there jealousy?"

"Only in so much as I've had to wait, so not jealousy. More inconvenience."

"How did you feel watching your buddy have sex with me?"

"Jimmy knows how to work it. You guys looked good together."

She nods and tips her head back into the water, wetting her hair before she straightens. “Does your cock have a name?”

“Nike, because he just likes to do it.”

The bubble of laughter that pours out of Allie is the best sound. Her warm eyes spark with amusement and, I’d like to think, with appreciation. They say that the way to man’s heart is through his stomach. Well, I think the way to a woman’s heart is with humor.

“You’re a funny guy, Jonas.”

“You’re an interesting woman, Allie.”

“Interesting?” She quirks a brow, urging me to elaborate.

“Well, when we first got here, you seemed terrified of all of us and the task you needed to complete. And in only a few days, you’ve transformed into this goddess before me. Confident. Sexy. Taking it all in your stride.”

“Which do you think is the real me?” she asks.

“Both.”

“And which do you prefer?”

I shrug. “Both. It’s okay to be cautious, and it’s okay to throw caution to the wind. You seem more relaxed now, though.”

“I am,” she says. “But I’m worried it’s going to bite me in the ass.”

“Can I bite you in the ass?”

Allie splashes a little water in my direction and around the corner, there’s a rumble of raucous laughter that reminds me

that we have company. Lots of company.

Leaning forward a little, her hand disappears beneath the water and I hold my breath, silently pleading she'll touch me.

"Where do you want to get to in life?" she asks. Her hand touches my knee and the shiver that runs through me is like lightning.

"I want to get into you, princess," I whisper, taking her hand into mine. The temptation is to press it against my cock, but instead, I bring it to my lips.

"And after me?"

"There's no after you, Allie. Once I'm in, I'm going to want to stay." Her eyes have glazed, and I use her arm to ease her closer to me. "Did they make you sore?" I ask. "The six before me?"

She shakes her head. "I guess my body understands the assignment."

"So, why aren't we fucking right now?"

Her hand drifts to my cock, taking it firmly in her palm. "Because you're funny and I enjoy spending time with you." Her voice is just louder than a whisper, tickling up my spine as my dick goes rock hard in her grasp.

"I'm funny during sex, too," I say. "Orgasms and laughs. They go together like peaches and cream."

I ease her forward until she's hovering over my lap, my hands gripping the outside of her thighs. It takes every ounce of restraint to prolong this rather than race towards the finish line. Before I touch her more, I bring my lips to hers, licking

the underside of her top lip, tasting the sweetness of her mouth before deepening the kiss.

No wonder the men in this house are crazy for this woman. The combination of her innocence and her passion is so fucking intoxicating. Drawing back, I duck to nuzzle her neck as she strokes me, nibbling her earlobe. “How did it feel to have my cock inside you?”

“Good,” she murmurs.

“It must have felt good,” I say. “Because it made you want so much more.”

“You turned me into an addict.” She nuzzles her nose over mine, smiling as I shift my hips into her grasp.

“Does the real thing feel as good as the rubber version?”

“Better. Even in this water, you feel hot.”

“Do you want to see it? The real thing, up close and personal?”

Her eyes meet mine and she blinks slowly.

“Yeah. Show me.”

When her hand leaves my dick, I want to kick myself in the shin for being such an idiot, but then I lift myself out of the water until I’m sitting on the side of the hot tub and Allie’s between my legs. I struggle out of the clingy fabric of my shorts, tossing them next to me, and laugh as Allie’s eyes widen at the sight of my dick in all its glory. Droplets of water run down the sides, and I rest back on my hands, stretching out my body, loving the way her eyes feast on all of my hard work and dedication.



“Damn, Jonas,” she whispers with a slight shake of her head. “Damn.”

My dick taps my belly, and Allie’s lips part.

“You want to taste it?” I ask.

She nods, then blinks up at me with uncertainty clouding her expression. “I don’t really know what I’m doing,” she admits.

“Want me to teach you how to make it good?”

“Yes.” The breathiness of her acceptance is as good as a lick over my balls. I don’t think I’ve ever told a girl exactly what to do to please me. Mostly, they do as much as they can, bearing in mind what they’re working with and generally it feels good, except when teeth get involved. My dick doesn’t like teeth.

“Spit in your hand,” I tell her.

With uncertainty tugging her brows she spits daintily in her palm. “That’s it. Wrap it around the base of my cock.”

I laugh when her eyes widen. “You want my spit on your cock?”

“Yeah, baby.”

She does what I say, concentrating so hard that I have to bite my lip not to laugh. It feels good, not only the sensation but teaching her too. “Now give it a little lick.”

When her tongue laps at the head of my cock it kicks in her hand, and she jumps. “Damn, Jonas. This thing has a life of its own.”

“That looked so fucking good,” I almost growl. “Do it again, but this time, swirl your tongue all the way around and then

take my big dick into your mouth.”

When she listens perfectly and wraps her pretty pink lips around my dick, I groan. Damn, it feels so good, and the eye contact she gives me as she bobs up and down, sucking just enough to make my toes curl, is exquisite.

“That’s it,” I groan. “That’s perfect. Give your hand a little twist...like that...oh yeah...just like that.”

I gather her hair into my hand, twisting it around my fist, giving her gentle encouragement, and she moans as I ease her deeper, pulling back before I trigger her gag reflex. Her lips pop from my dick and she licks them, staring up at me. “You give awesome head, Allie,” I tell her. “You don’t need any lessons from me.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, baby. Just keep doing what you’re doing.”

And she does. She does until my hand in her hair is trembling with restraint and my knuckles are nothing but white bone against the edge of the hot tub. I’m about to tell her we should stop and switch places when footsteps sound on the tiles and a woman’s voice makes a gasping sound.

“Oh my god. I’m so sorry.”

Allie pulls back, letting my cock pop from her mouth. We both swivel to find a woman in her twenties dressed in business attire standing on the pathway from the pool area. Jimmy’s behind, waving his hands. “I’m sorry, guys. I thought you were still doing the interview.”

“Grace,” Allie gasps, ducking under the water and hugging her arms around her breasts. “Can you give me a minute?”

Grace, whose eyes have bugged out and now has both hands over her face, nods and turns toward Jimmy, who begins to guide her away.

He's laughing silently now and if I had something handy, I'd be tempted to toss it at his head. I have no idea who Grace is, but I'm assuming from Allie's response that she's a colleague of some sort.

As Grace scuttles away, Allie buries her face in her hands.

"I'd tell you she didn't see anything but..."

My comment is met with a long groan. "I'm finished," she says eventually. "Grace will tell Kirsty what she saw, and my career is over."

I slide back into the warm water and rest my hands on Allie's shoulders. Our eyes meet and I bend my head to plant a soft, reassuring kiss on her lips. "If she does, it's your word against hers, and believe me, none of us are saying anything that's going to get you into trouble."

She exhales a long breath. "I hope you're right."

"I'm right," I say. "Now, as much as I'd love to keep this thing going, maybe you should get dressed and go find out what she wants."

"I don't know how I'm going to face her."

"Just paint a smile on your face and act like nothing happened."

"You haven't met Grace." Allie rises from the water, turning to reach for her robe. Without towels, she's forced to tug it onto her wet body.

“It’ll all be okay. I’ll wait here, though. I don’t want to add fuel to any fire by inserting my sexy self into the discussion.”

“You already inserted your sexy self into the discussion.”  
She looks pertinently at my dick.

“Good point, princess. Good point.”

I watch as she hurries away from the hot tub to face the music, feeling terrible that my lessons and enjoyment have brought her trouble.

This could be the end of the arrangement we have, but I’m hoping it won’t be.



## ALLIE

I've never been so ashamed in all my life. As I hurry from the hot tub, bedraggled and wet in my hastily grabbed kimono, I have no idea what I'm going to say to Grace.

Jonas is right. If she tells Kirsty, it would be her word against mine. That's what I have to keep in mind when I talk to her so that I don't dig myself an even bigger hole.

Plus, what the hell is she doing here?

This is my assignment.

I don't follow her when she's given a job. This is interference on a grand scale and I'm not happy. I'm not happy at all.

As I rush past the pool, all eyes are on me. Stefan lifts himself out of the water in the sexiest, smoothest action ever and I momentarily lose my train of thought at his wet, toned body.

And this has been my problem from the beginning. How am I supposed to keep my head and maintain professionalism when there is so much temptation in this place? I was doomed from the start.

Inside, Russell and Theron stand at the counter, two sweating beers resting in front of them. There's too much muscle on show in here. Too much bare skin and raw masculinity.

Music plays over the speakers and it's something sexy and seductive that really doesn't help my case.

Everything about this place feels like a porn set.

Grace is by the door, fussing to find her keys in her bag.

"Grace."

She swivels her head in my direction, but only for a second before she's back to rummaging. "Kirsty sent me," she says. "Something about you being out of your depth. I was here to lend a hand...you know...provide some support."

"I'm not out of my depth. Everything is completely on track."

Grace glances at me again. "You call that 'on track'?" I can hear the air quotes in the way she enunciates, and it makes me want to scream.

"The article will be written. That's what Kirsty expects, isn't it?"

"That's your job." Grace has her keys clutched in her hand, the metal parts poking out between her fingers like a spiked knuckle duster. "I mean, I'm all for having a good time, and we had a joke about this, but it's work, Allie."

"I'm doing my job." My tone is firm, but Grace isn't buying it. When she shakes her head and looks to the door, I take a step forward.

"Sucking dick isn't your job," she mutters, picking up her bag.

It's like a slap in the face from a woman who always discusses her sex life in graphic detail in the office. I can

recount every one-night stand she's had in the past two years, including positions, cock sizes and marks out of ten, and I've never been judgy of the way she chooses to live her life. The fact that she's turning her judgment on me now makes fury bubble up like lava.

"I know what my job is, Grace. And the article I write will be perfect. My process is my business and if Kirsty doesn't trust me to do this job, then why the hell did she give it to me in the first place?"

"Because I couldn't do it," she says.

It's like she's slapped me around the face again, but this time with a brick. My chest rises and falls with angry, frustrated breaths and my hands flex at my sides. I could scream. I'm so furious, but no sound will come out of my mouth.

"Allie," Jimmy comes into my sphere of vision and his worried expression only makes things worse.

Grace is humiliating me in front of these men, and I can't take it. She's ruining this place where I finally feel like the person I've always wanted to be. She's stomping on my confidence with her black patent stilettos and the hopelessness and powerlessness that's pressing down on me is awful. I put my hand up to Jimmy, halting his progress. I know he means well. Any man in this house would step in to defend me right now, but I shouldn't need their protection. I should be able to stand up for myself.

"We'll, then Kirsty's a bigger fool than I thought. I'm sorry, Grace, but you've overstepped here. You should have called



first before you set out. You should have respected my professional scope on this project.”

“Professional?” It’s said in a scoffing tone, and I grit my teeth and shake my head, barely keeping my cool.

“Don’t push me.” My tone is grave. Quiet. Menacing. No one is going to reduce me in this way ever again. Something changes in Grace’s expression. The narrowing of her eyes and the tightness of her lips relax just a fraction. Her gaze flicks to Jimmy, and then to Theron, Stefan, Tom, Russell, and Gabe who have all moved closer to stand in solidarity with me. I feel their silent encouragement and support buoying me up.

“I’m sorry. You’re right. I should have called.”

“And…”

“And I’m sure you have everything under control.”

“She does.” Theron’s hand on my shoulder is heavy, his voice so deep and determined that Grace takes a tiny step back.

Take that, Kirsty, and her stupid minion.

“Well. I guess…just call me if you need any help with anything.”

“She won’t need to, but that’s a kind thought.” Tom rests his hand on my other shoulder.

“Okay. Right.” Grace shuffles faster over the hardwood to the door than I’ve ever seen her walk. Theron and Tom move their hands so I can follow, still dripping with hot tub water as I go.

Grace turns as she steps outside, her attention behind me at the wall of gods waiting to make sure I'm okay. Her eyes meet mine and a small smile flickers at the edges of her lips. "I really should have taken this assignment."

I don't know whether to laugh or tell her to fuck off, so I do neither. Kirsty might have wanted Grace to write this article, but this assignment was meant for me. These men were meant for me, and the very thought of Grace's hands on them, replacing me in every scenario we've lived through, fills me with viciousness.

"I'll see you next week." I step back, hand already on the door, ready to shut her out.

"Yeah," she says. "Yeah, you will."

I don't watch her leave. What would be the point? There are ten men inside this house whose company I enjoy way more than Grace's, and it's time to get back to them.

She's done me a favor because her arrival has made me realize one thing. The days are passing fast, and we only have so much time together before the outside world pulls us all in different directions.

I'm not wasting time.

The days are going to be seized...hard!



## THERON

Allie's colleague leaves with her tail between her legs because our girl stands up for herself with an epic force that makes us all so proud. We stood by her side for support, but we didn't need to. She had it all under control.

After she shuts the front door and braces herself, inhaling and exhaling a few times, I grab her wrist. "You did good."

She smiles brightly, it feels forced. "I need to get back to Jonas."

"I'll walk with you."

The rest of the guys disperse, talking quietly while fixing themselves drinks or heading back to the pool. The strange interruption into the peace of our day has passed, but the rippled impact lingers. "Is she trouble?" I ask, blinking into the bright sunshine as we make our way to the hot tub.

"I thought she was my friend." Allie tugs her dress closer around her body, ducking to get through the narrow walkway surrounded by exotic flowers.

"And now?"

"Now I'm not so sure. I never picked up any jealousy between us before, but I think she resents me for being given this assignment."

"What did she see?" I ask. I heard the whispers that it was explicit, but I want to find out for sure.

“Oral sex.”

Jonas is still in the hot tub, braced with both arms outstretched against the sides. It's so secluded in this part of the property that I get why Allie felt comfortable enough to fool around out here. He straightens when he sees Allie and then his focus moves to me, eyebrows raising in a question. *What the fuck are you doing here?* I can practically hear the words from his tightly pressed lips.

“What happened?” he asks, refocusing on Allie as she unfastens her dress and slips naked into the hot tub like nothing's wrong. I'm hard at just the fleeting sight of her perky tits and curvy ass as her body disappears beneath the bubbling water.

“She's gone. She threw a few accusations around.”

Debating whether I should make my excuses or get into the tub, too, I rest my hands on my hips. “And Allie defended herself perfectly.”

“Good for you.” Jonas reaches out and cups her cheek, and I'm immediately jealous of the easy affection between them. This arrangement was my idea and I've had to wait in line behind seven other men for my chance to be with Allie.

Allie presses a kiss into his palm, and the jealousy surges again. “I have a feeling she would have been all over you guys if she was given the assignment.”

“She was jealous,” I say. “Jealous that you were getting all the attention. She's that kind of woman.”

“You could tell what kind of woman she is from five minutes of observation?”

I move to sit on the edge of the tub, my legs still outside of the water. "I can tell a lot of things."

"So, tell me what kind of woman she is."

It's a challenge that she believes I'll fail, but I'm confident in my abilities. "She goes out every weekend and picks up a new guy. She tells you it was just a one-night stand, but she's secretly hoping he's going to want more, which he doesn't. She's on a high while she waits for his call, but by Tuesday, she hits rock bottom and eats a load of chocolate or baked goods to cheer herself up. She tells everyone everything. No secrets. She wears clothes that are too revealing for the office and allies herself with the queen bitches. She has no relationship with her father..." I trail off, closing my eyes to trawl my brain for anything else I have to add.

"Fuck, Theron." When I open my eyes, Allie's mouth is hanging open. "Hang on a minute." She moves closer. "Have you fucked her? Is that how you know all that?"

"No. And No."

"So how? Do you like have a degree in psychology or something?"

"I know women, baby." I don't mean it to sound smarmy, but it comes out that way and Jonas makes a sound in the back of his throat. "I mean, I've known enough women to be able to single out the ones who are trouble with a capital T."

"Trouble?"

I swing my legs into the bubbling water, no longer sensing any objection to my presence. "The ones who are hard work."

They pretend to be one thing but turn out to be something totally different.”

“He means the unhinged ones.”

When I slide into the bubbling water, my knee brushes Allie’s on one side and Jonas’s on the other. Allie’s bare breasts are close to the surface of the water, her nipples coming into view as bubbles burst and reform. She’s so close that I could brush the back of my hand against her nipple without needing to shift closer. I could reach over and slide my fingers between her legs and find out how tight her almost virgin pussy really is.

“The ones who’ve had difficult childhoods,” I say. “I don’t want to sound mean about your colleague. It’s not her fault. People spend most of their adulthood living out the issues they picked up in childhood.”

“Oh yeah. So, what’s my issue?” Allie stares at me defiantly with eyes the color of honey and pursed lips like a rosebud.

“Your parents were too hard on you. They didn’t give you enough encouragement, so now you find it hard to trust your internal voice.”

Jonas lets out a low whistle.

“And Jonas didn’t get enough attention, so he found a way to get people to notice him by making them laugh.”

“Touche.” He laughs, but it’s wry. “So, what’s your childhood issue?”

“My parents inflated my ego too much. I have to remind myself that it’s only in their house that I’m the king. Everywhere else, I’m just an average Joe.”

“Average Joe with an uncanny sense of observation and analysis.” Allie shakes her head. “You know, I’m a little scared of you now?”

I reach out and tuck a damp curl behind her ear. “You don’t need to be afraid of me, sweet girl. I won’t hurt you. I never use my observations for villainy.”

Allie rolls her neck, easing out tension, and my eyes meet Jonas’s across the water. He knows I’m after him in the lineup. This could be something joint if he’s in agreement and Allie wants it that way. He nods and so do I. An agreement between men. Now we have to find out if this beautiful, intelligent, sweet woman is in agreement.

“So, you were interrupted?” I lift my eyebrows to make my statement a question.

“Yeah, we were.” Jonas shifts beneath the water. “Allie asked for instruction.”

“You wanted lessons?” I ask.

She nods, her tongue darting between her lips.

“Is Jonas a good teacher?”

“I think so.”

“Want to show me what you learned?”

My heart makes a weird thud in my chest as her eyes lower. The slight duck of her head is almost imperceptible, but it’s there. I shove my shorts over my ass and thighs and toss them over the side. My cock is so damn hard, it’s sore. I use my triceps to push up the side of the hot tub, spreading my legs



to give Allie easier access. Her eyes settle on my cock as I ease it between my fingers in long, hard, slow pulls.

“How come you’re uncut, man?” Jonas asks.

I laugh, fisting my cock like the weapon it is. “My dad doesn’t believe in that shit. His cock is in one piece. His son’s cock was going to be in one piece. You know, no one in Greece is circumcised unless it’s for religion or they have a medical issue. It’s only in America that everyone chops off the end of their dick for no reason.”

“It’s just the skin, man.” Jonas laughs like I’m making a bigger thing of it than it deserves, but I know a man who was circumcised as an adult. He fell in love and had to have the operation as part of his religious conversion. The dude is still traumatized. He says that sex doesn’t feel the same, that he’s not as sensitive down there. I feel sorry for the guy.

“It’s fucking barbaric. I like my dick exactly the way it is.”

“I like your dick too,” Allie says, but she’s studying it like it’s a creature on the verge of extinction. She slides off the underwater platform and moves slowly toward me. “I’m sure Jonas is a good teacher for his dick, but maybe you should give me some pointers for what I can do to rock your dick’s world.”

“Show me what he taught you, and I’ll tell you if I need something different.”

When Allie’s tongue touches my dick, I have to close my eyes because it’s sensory overload. She’s so sweet and tentative, it’s like my dick is the first one she’s ever had near her mouth. I’m not used to women savoring the experience.

I'm not used to slow exploration. Maybe it's because of my size that they tend to think they have to approach it like a mission rather than an adventure. They treat my dick like a mountain they have to climb rather than a beach they want to relax on.

"Oh, yeah," I groan as she flicks the sensitive area beneath the head. "Oh, that feels so fucking good."

When I open my eyes to gaze down at her, she's staring right at me and the zap of connection while she sinks down as much of my length as she can manage is toe curling. What's even more toe curling is that Jonas is behind Allie, stroking her between her legs.

Jeez. The way she moans when he hits the spot sends vibrations right through me.

"Do you want Jonas to fuck you while you blow me?" I ask. A quick nod of her head and my eyes meet Jonas's. "Have you got a condom?"

Allie pulls back with a slurp. "My pocket."

We both stare at her. "Such a girl scout." Jonas fumbles over the edge of the hot tub, pulling out a strip of foil packets like he won the lottery.

"Dry your dick," I advise him.

"On what? Everything is wet, including Allie."

"Use my robe."

Now that's a girl with dedication to the process.

Jonas delicately pats himself with Allie's expensive looking silky outfit and sheathes his cock with expert technique while

Allie continues her work.

And damn, she's good.

Her sweet lips are puffy and her eyes a little watery, but she's still the prettiest girl I've ever fucked. Prettier because there's nothing artificial about her. She's upfront about her lack of experience and what she's hoping to get out of our interactions. She's funny and clever in a quick-witted way I didn't realize I'd like. She doesn't fuss about makeup, false eyelashes or nails or any of the other bullshit my sister and cousins seem fixated with.

She's brave, too.

Brave for taking on ten strange men.

Brave for facing up to the desires she suppressed.

Brave for taking what she wants.

And her bravery is going to be rewarded.

I can't draw my eyes away from Jonas and what he's doing to Allie. Using his thick cock, he teases her pussy until her hips are wiggling and pushing back, searching for the penetration she's craving. His hands roam her curves, reaching beneath the water to find her nipples as she moans around my length. I don't know how long I can hold off, but I want to make this last.

"Give her what she wants," I tell Jonas softly. I cup her cheek in my massive hand. "She's been such a good girl. She deserves a big cock to fill her pussy."

"Is that what you want?" Jonas strokes down Allie's spine as she nods.

He doesn't wait a moment longer. Jonas's expression is pained as he works his way inside Allie, and she moans continuously at the stretch. He's big, but she knows. She used that dildo he made once before, but I bet this feels different. Better. Attached to a strong man whose hand can caress her clit and breasts, whose hips vary their tempo in response to her frantically moving hips. When he really starts to thrust, Allie loses her ability to focus on blowing me, letting me go as she hangs her head, drunk with sensation. "That's it, Jonas. Fuck her. Fuck her good."

I fist my cock, needing to take the edge off. Watching is good. So damned good. But it's difficult too. I want to be where Jonas is, feeling everything Jonas is feeling. I want Allie to feel me too. Gabe told me she took his full length from behind and ever since, I've been craving to know what it will feel like to bottom out inside her.

"Maybe we should switch it up," I say. "Maybe we should show Allie what it's like to have us both at the same time."

Allie's eyes are glazed and confused. "Two ten-inch cocks in your pussy," Jonas says, giving her ass a gentle slap. "Does that sound good, baby?"

When she doesn't answer, he laughs. "Her pussy clamped down when I asked the question, so she's either excited by the idea or terrified."

"Both," she says. "I'm both."

"So, let's try, and if you don't like it, we can stop."

Jonas pulls out and tosses me a condom. Allie straightens, ducking under the water to slick her hair back. When she

squeezes the water from the wet length, her tits look phenomenal.

I'm ashamed to admit my hand is trembling as I roll the condom down my dick. I'm too jacked up. I've wanted this for too long.

"Get over here." I take Allie by the elbow and pull her towards me, lifting her into my lap. She's featherlight compared to the bricks I heft every day, and I devour her mouth like chocolate pudding. Without even trying, my cock notches at her entrance and she wiggles just enough to let him in an inch. My mind is fucking scrambled as Jonas pushes on her hips, impaling her on my cock. She gives three testing jerks, bottoming out and gasping with each one. Then Jonas is behind her, kissing her neck and along her shoulders. Trailing his fingers down her spine until her body is shivery and her hands clutch at my skin. "You have to relax," Jonas whispers in her ear, sucking on the lobe until she whimpers. "You can do this. Your body can take us. You just have to relax."

"Hold on to me." I take Allie's hands and hook them around the back of my neck. "Rest against my chest."

As she does it, I lean back, bracing the weight of us both on my arms.

"Relax," I whisper as Jonas lines up his cock at her entrance. Allie's pussy clenches and Jonas smooths his hand over her hip, patting it gently. "It's okay, baby. I won't do anything to hurt you. It's going to feel so good. You're going to feel so perfectly full, like nothing you've ever felt before. All you have to do is let me in, and me and Theron will make this so good for you."

I wish I could wrap an arm around her, to let her know how firmly in my care she is. A rush of protectiveness barrels through me as Allie curls her face into my warm skin, blowing out fast breaths.

As Jonas pushes forward, he grabs her hips and I stay completely still, letting him take the reins. The hard part is breaching the first inch, and all of us hold our collective breaths as Allie's body stretches to accommodate him. Then, with a long groan, he eases in, inch by slow inch, making everything so fucking tight I can hardly breathe.

Allie's panting and moaning, her hands grasping the back of my neck and holding on for dear life, and when Jonas cants his hips, Allie lets out a strangled cry. "Oh my ...oh...oh... that's...oh."

Jonas presses against the small of her back, forcing her body closer to mine and the additional friction on her clit makes her buck. It's my job to brace through all the extreme pleasure. I have to keep the ultimate level of control while Jonas takes care of all the movement. If I don't, we could really hurt Allie and I'd never forgive myself.

But I don't need to move.

Because all of this feels so damned good.

Allie jerks against me, her body becoming a live wire as she chases release, and when she comes, I have to close my eyes, narrowing my attention down to just the ripple of her pussy and the thud of her racing heart.

"That's it," Jonas soothes, his thumb pressing against her tight little asshole, causing her to gasp. "That's it." He doesn't

stop fucking into her, the relentlessness of his thrusts taking me over the edge.

“Oh fuuuuuccckkkk.” My balls draw tight as liquid heat surges through my cock. I imagine no barrier between us, just Allie’s hot pussy and my cum, all messy and sticky and perfect, and then Jonas is coming too, pumping and pumping until Allie’s moaning softly, sprawled over me like a rag doll, entirely spent. When Jonas’s knees go out and he collapses back into the hot tub, gasping from the exertion, I gather Allie into my embrace, kissing her hard on the forehead, then soothing her with softer kisses over her cheeks and gentle caresses over her back. My cock slides out from inside her and the loss of her warmth fills my chest with an ache.

Is this the only time we’re going to be like this together? The days here are passing faster than I could have imagined, and Allie still has Oliver and Russell to go. Will she want a repeat?

I can’t predict.

I couldn’t have predicted any of this, most of all how right she feels in my arms.

If this is the only time I’m going to be with Allie, then this can’t be it. I can’t walk away yet.

“Jonas.” My voice is deep and demanding and despite the bleary look in his eyes, he brings his attention to me. “Sit on the edge. Take Allie.”

She moans against my chest as I pass her over to him, this time so her back is resting against his chest. Her body is illuminated by the rays of the sun in a way that makes her skin

radiate like satin and her form seem almost otherworldly. Her eyes are glazed as she looks down at me and where I've positioned myself between her legs. "I can't walk away without tasting you," I tell her. "I want to feel you on my tongue."

Sliding my rough hands up her thighs, I watch for the moment her pupils dilate, knowing I've flicked the switch again. She might be spent, but I know I can bring her that level of pleasure all over again. I push her legs further apart, then use my thumbs to part her sweet labia. Her clit is swollen and engorged, and her vagina is still wide open from the double penetration. We've ravaged her body, and she's all the more perfect because of it.

"You're beautiful," I tell her. "This pussy is so fucking perfect."

She moans as Jonas uses his fingers to pluck at her nipples, and I use the rough pad of my thumb to brush over the straining tip of her clit.

When she jerks from the sensation, I smile wickedly. "I like this. Jonas holding you in place so I can become a master of your body." As I move closer, the scent of her pussy spins my mind out of control. It's addictive and all-consuming. I don't want to let her go. Not now. Not ever.

I slide my tongue through her pussy, over and over, lapping at her arousal, teasing her clit until she's quivering and shaking and moaning my name. And as I make her come, I own her pleasure, her moans, her spasms. Rising over her, I take her mouth, kissing her so deeply that neither of us can breathe, but it's not enough. It won't be enough because this



is it. What was arranged to happen between us is done, and even though I've tried hard, I can't seem to work out how to bring Allie with me once we leave this beach house and return to our normal lives.



## ALLIE

When darkness falls and all the men in the house have disappeared to wash the day from their skin, I rustle up the only meal I'm confident to present to such a large group. Spaghetti carbonara with homemade garlic bread and a large green salad topped with parmesan shavings.

The scent of garlic is probably what brings the men down the stairs and they gather around the kitchen island, fixing drinks and making small talk. From the outside, we are the picture of domestic bliss. From the inside, I'm trying to keep a smile on my face and enjoy every precious moment, but I have so much buzzing around inside my head that it's almost impossible to keep the mask in place.

Grace's expression and bitter words are still there.

Kirsty's disappointment and controlling actions are there, too.

All my doubts about what the hell I'm doing with my life are like a sour cocktail.

And over the top of it all is the ticking clock, counting down the days and hours of my time with these amazing men.

Oliver takes plates and begins to lay the table, but the thought of being confined in this house with the swirling soup of my thoughts makes me ball my fists and exhale a breath. Theron, whose watchful eyes have been resting on me since he descended the stairs, places a big hand in the middle of my

back. "What do you need?" he asks, in such a low rumbling tone that it settles me just a little.

"To be outside," I say.

"Hey, Oliver. Bring those plates over here. We're having dinner at the beach."

Heads turn, and Oliver opens his mouth as if to object but decides against it. Everyone's freshly washed and in their evening best, but eating pasta at the beach is the best idea I've heard all day.

Oliver places the big white dishes next to me on the counter and I begin to serve up huge mounds for all the big, strong men around me. With plates, silverware and drinks in hand, we all troop past the pool, through the gate and down the stairs. When my feet hit the cool sand, it's like every worry I have slips out between the grains and I can breathe again.

Oliver, obviously worried about his designer slacks, appears with blankets in a large bag and we spread them out, side to side and corner to corner until they form a square big enough for us all. Hunger gets the better of the group and we eat without much conversation.

When we're done, plates are set aside on the sand, and I remember something I left in the kitchen. "I'll be right back." Scrambling to my feet, I dash back to the house before anyone can suggest joining me. I want this to be a surprise.

The small chocolate cake I baked is hidden away on a high shelf. I don't have any candles but I don't think it will matter. I bring a cake knife and carry the plate carefully back to the beach.

Jonas is the first to spot me, and he straightens immediately.

“Happy birthday to you,” I sing softly, ignoring my own embarrassment at my tuneless tone. My performance is less Marilyn Monroe, more Cookie Monster. “Happy birthday to you.”

All the other men look around, confused. “Happy birthday dear Jonas. Happy birthday to you.” I kneel in front of him on the blanket, presenting my best cake making efforts. His eyes meet mine and they’re filled with a swirling soup of happiness and sadness. I don’t know the reason he didn’t announce his birthday in the same way he wears the rest of his life on his sleeve. I just know that he deserves to be celebrated.

“I didn’t know it’s your birthday, man,” Jimmy says. He seems embarrassed, but I don’t think it’s because he’s a bad friend. I think Jonas always keeps it to himself.

“How did you know?” he asks, then nods. “The application form?”

“Yeah. I don’t have candles, but eating the cake is the best part of birthdays, anyway.”

“Where did you get the cake?” Clay asks.

“I baked it.”

There’s a murmur of approval and if I didn’t know Jonas better, I’d say there was a tear in his eye. Probably just a grain of sand.

“Birthday boy gets to cut and eat the first slice.”

Jonas takes the cake knife and divides the cake into twelve even slices before taking two portions for himself. I laugh and he shrugs. "If I didn't take two, these guys would probably argue over the last slice."

As the cake is shared, each of the men pats Jonas on the back, or congratulates him, and Jonas grins so widely, I start to wonder if he's ever had a birthday celebration before.

When he's finished his double portion, he seeks me out and presses a chocolate-flavored kiss to my lips. "Thank you, Allie. Thank you."

It's only when he's gone back to his spot on the blanket that I inhale a shaky breath and swallow my emotions.

I lay on my back with my knees bent, staring up at the star filled sky. Theron does the same next to me, and under the cover of darkness, he takes my hand in his and holds it. I'm transported back to a love story I read when I was a teen which had a scene just like this. The author wrote that beneath the vastness of the sky; the characters felt small and insignificant, and it's true. I do feel tiny, like a grain of sand on this beach. One moment, it's on the surface, touched by the wind and the sun, experiencing everything the world has to offer. The next it's buried and forgotten, crowded in the cold and the dark.

These past few days have been the first in my life where I've felt like my head has breached the surface, but now I can already sense the downward spiral that's going to come when this is over. I don't want to go back to my lonely flat and my career that's drowning my soul. I don't want to kiss these men

on the cheek and disappear from their lives. I can't imagine saying goodbye.

"Thank you for the meal," Theron says softly.

"Thank you for this." I turn to face him, as all around us, the other men rest on their backs, staring up into the sky.

"This is what you needed." He leans in to press a gentle kiss to my lips. "And that too."

I snuggle into his chest, and he wraps his big arms around me until I feel completely safe.

"This is nice," Tom says from somewhere behind me.

"Yeah. Nothing like a romantic evening with nine other guys," Jonas jokes.

The rumble of laughter makes me laugh too. What we're doing is far from normal, but somehow it feels exactly right.

"I love you, man." Jimmy slaps Jonas on the shoulder and the two of them end up in a hilarious bro hug, which Jonas is the first to try to wriggle out from.

"Listen dude, I love you too, but definitely not in that way."

"Shame," I say, surprising a few of the men in the group. "What? That would be hot as fuck to watch."

Theron squeezes me and digs his finger into my ribs. "There's only one person that any of us wants to fuck and watch and that's you."

"Point to Theron," Carson pipes up.

I struggle to sit up, searching for him in the log pile of men around me. "What is this scoring system you have?"

“Don’t worry about it,” Clay laughs. “He does this shit to confuse people. He thinks it’s funny.”

“I can’t even remember who’s in front,” Carson admits, “although I hope it’s me!”

“What would your prize be?”

He grins, and I remember what that smile felt like against my skin. “Another night with you.”

“If that’s the prize, then I’m sure I’m winning,” Gabe says.

Theron makes a low sound that stops all the bickering. “She’s not a prize anyone’s winning.”

I know he means it kindly. He’s telling them not to think about me as something they can possess. It’s protective and lovely, and it puts a lump in my throat as big as a Gobstopper.

And stupidly, all I can think of is that I want to be the prize. I want to be someone these men want to possess. I want more nights like this with them surrounding me like a huge wall against the world.

I’d give them my body whenever they wanted it. I’d give them my heart in all the different ways they needed it. I’d try to light up their lives in whatever way would make them happy if I could just feel good enough and brave enough for once in my life.

Theron’s assessment of me was right.

I’m trapped in a place where the ground always feels shaky and I’m always on my own, trying to find my way in the world.

But here and now, I can pretend for a little while longer that I have what Natalie found with her triplet husbands.



Safety. Security. Confidence. Love. Family. Belonging.

It's not too much to ask for, is it?

But as I focus on the stars and the beat of Theron's heart against my cheek, it feels like I'm hoping for all the gold in the world.



**RUSSELL**

I used to be a good sleeper before I joined the military. As a teen, I could fall into my bed fully clothed, still wearing sneakers or boots, and have no problem grabbing thirteen hours of shuteye.

Now, I struggle to achieve four or five hours of uninterrupted sleep before I wake with a racing heart and sense of disorientation that feels like I've been run over by a linebacker.

It's worse in this stupid beach house where every noise is unfamiliar and where ten other people that I don't know very well are slumbering in the rooms around me.

The others have no idea how much time I've spent downstairs in the middle of the night, drinking chamomile tea - my doctor's recommendation for a relaxing drink - and staring out at the moonlit sea.

They don't know all the memories that have flicked through my mind like a reel of doom, while they dream peacefully.

It's cortisol that wakes me up. I've done enough reading to know what surges through my body, making me feel like I could run straight out of my bed and across a desert.

But tonight, when I wake, my heart thuds peacefully, and for a moment, I'm confused. Then I hear a whimpering noise and it becomes clear. Someone is distressed, and that's what woke me at...

...I check my phone...two am.

The whimper breaks the silence of the night again and I swing my legs off the edge of the mattress, ready to investigate.

Back when I slept with bunks of other men, I got used to hearing them play out their fears in the middle of the night. The brain is a fucked-up thing sometimes.

But I'm not used to hearing a woman's nighttime turmoil.

The hallway is pitch black and I fumble my way along, using the wall to guide me. Two doors down, Allie's room is shut tight, but her distressed moans cut through the walls, regardless. I try the handle, confident that if she wanted to remain in total privacy at whatever cost, she'd have bolted it closed from the inside. The door swings open and there she is, hair spread over her pillow, nightgown bunched up around her waist, revealing a sweet pair of white and pink polka dot panties. She moans again, struggling against the sheets that are twisted around her body. I move closer, cautious not to startle her. Kneeling at her bedside, I rest my hand on her shoulder. "Allie. It's okay. You're having a bad dream. It's me, Russell. You're just having a bad dream."

She shudders awake, her eyes opening and straining into the darkness, finding my face.

"It's okay," I say again. "It was just a bad dream."

Allie still appears to be halfway between dreamworld and reality, treading the line of consciousness, so I shift to sit on the edge of the bed and gather her into my arms.

She smells of warm vanilla and ocean breezes, and sighs contentedly against my collarbone as I hold her.

“I’m sorry,” she says eventually. “For waking you. I just...I don’t know what happened.”

I don’t believe her because when dreams are so close to waking, they’re always recalled easily. But if she doesn’t want to share her fears with me, then that’s okay. I’ve gotten used to holding mine under a concrete slab.

“I don’t sleep well,” I say. “You didn’t disturb me.”

Moonlight streams through her window where the drapes remain open. Allie closes her eyes, so comfortable in my company that she can relax back in her half-sleep without a second thought. There’s no fear that I’ll hurt her or that something evil will come for her in the night.

Hell would freeze over before I’d let anything hurt this sweet girl.

I study her pretty face as her breathing evens out. Long lashes fan shadows across her cheekbones. Soft, round cheeks make her appear younger than she is. Her button nose narrows at the tip and her full lips have a cupid’s bow that frays a little at the top. Her hair is the color of horse chestnuts and is just as shiny. She’s pretty in a girl next door kind of way, but with an extra dusting of intelligent sophistication that makes her more intriguing.

With her eyes closed, her warm brown eyes are hidden behind relaxed lids and I miss the light that emanates from her during waking hours.

There’s trouble brewing in this house. I can feel it in my bones. I’m like a barometer for pressure building, and Allie has all the telltale signs of someone teetering on the edge.

Something's wrong with her work and the people there don't strike me as decent.

Something's wrong with her too. She's conflicted, but also jumping headlong into this crazy arrangement like a person who has no concern about the consequences.

It's been hard waiting for my time with her, and also a relief.

In the beginning, when Theron told her about his idea, I wanted to get in my truck and drive away before I had a chance to witness all these men deflowering such a sweet, innocent girl.

But I knew I had to be here to protect her and make sure no one did anything to her that she didn't want.

Now I know the other men won't hurt her, but I worry she's going to get hurt anyway.

I worry the moment I kiss her lips and caress her body that I'm going to be lost in her and I'm not good at finding my way back.

"Russell," she whispers, making me jump.

"You're awake?"

She reaches out and touches my cheek. I take her hand in mine and kiss it. "Are you next, Russell?" she whispers. "Is that why you came?"

"No." I press another kiss to her knuckles. "Oliver's next."

"You're the last man?"

I nod and fix my eyes to the ceiling as Allie shifts against my body, pressing warm soft flesh against the hard planes of my chest and the lean muscles of my thigh. I try to keep my

breathing even, wanting her so badly I can almost taste her on the tip of my tongue.

I turn to face her and find her staring up at me, her gaze flicking down to my mouth and then up to my eyes.

“Allie,” I whisper, half pleading, half desperately asking her to be strong.

“We don’t have to wait. No one would know.”

Fuck. How much strength should a man be expected to have in a situation like this? “I’d know. We can’t. I couldn’t do that to the rest of them.”

“Bros before hoes?”

“Don’t say that. That’s not what I mean. It’s just there’s an order to this thing. That’s what’s keeping it all working.”

She nods, her brow furrowing.

Feeling her disappointment and maybe a little sting of rejection, I quickly kiss her forehead. “You don’t understand how much I want you. I’m fucking burning for you right now. The restraint it’s taking not to touch you, to taste your mouth...”

“So taste it.”

I shake my head, but when I see her hurt expression, I can’t take it. So, I move closer and cup her cheek, tilting her chin so I can give her what she wants.

It’s just a kiss. Just one tiny kiss that spills warmth through my bones and arousal right to the root of my cock. I tease her lips, absorbing her soft whimpers, fighting the desire to do



more, go further, take her with all the passion and desire I have searing me from the inside out.

The kiss ends as softly as it started, but as I pull away, Allie reaches out and touches my chest, her fingers trailing down over the ridges of my abdomen. She hesitates for a split second and I'm about to take her wrist and stop her, but then her fingers brush the edges of my shorts.

"We can't," I say again.

"I just...I'm scared to sleep again, Russell. The same dream keeps coming back to me and I hate it. I'm driving down a highway but suddenly I'm facing the oncoming traffic, like in that movie Ronin, and everyone is swerving to miss me and I'm screaming because the car won't slow down, and I don't have the skill to spin it so I'm stuck just hurtling in the wrong direction. I need something to take my mind away to a better place."

She's trembling now, the memory of the dream too fresh and raw.

"Dreams can reveal how we really feel," I say gently. "Do you feel out of control like that in your life?"

She nods and bites the center of her pouty lip.

"Have the dreams gotten worse since you got here?" I don't want the answer to be yes, and my heart sinks when she nods. "Do you feel out of control of this situation with me and the other men?"

She shakes her head, but her eyes flick to the corner of the room and her lip stays clasped between her teeth.

I tip her chin and force her to look at me. “You should feel in control. Can’t you see how much power you have over all of us? Can’t you sense how far we’d go for you?”

Allie’s face remains impassive.

I try again. “What you did with the others, wasn’t it powerful? You could feel the energy of it, right?”

Her hand trails over my chest, her expression becoming thoughtful. “I feel the energy,” she says. “But I’m conflicted. These things I want...they’re not straightforward. It’s all just a present tense experience, but when we’re done, the same future stretches out in front of me.”

I nod. “I understand that. And the future that’s stretching out isn’t the one you want...the one that will leave you feeling fulfilled?”

“I’m always too afraid to take the leap.”

“What if you weren’t afraid anymore? What would you do?”

“I’d change my career. I’d stop talking to my parents about my life. I’d write what makes my heart feel full.”

“What about your personal life? What are you looking for there?”

“To be happy with someone,” she says quickly. “To be with someone who will grow as I grow.”

“Someone?”

The question hangs between us, and Allie rolls onto her back, eyes fixed to the ceiling as she contemplates an answer.

“My friend found nine someones. Natalie, from next door, found three.”

“What would make you happy? If there were no outside expectations or self-imposed barriers. What would you choose?”

She turns her head, staring at me across the pillow. “I’d stay here with you guys. I’d make a life here. I’d be content in this place.”

Her admission is heartfelt. I’m not a great reader of women, but I can tell that much. It’s in the slight shrug of her shoulder, and the downward curl of her lips. She’s embarrassed by the truth and she’s trying to brush off the strength of her feelings. The little sigh she expels after reveals something too. Confessing has lifted a weight from her shoulders. She feels relief but I feel panic because all I want to do is make this sweet girl happy, but how can I when I have no control over what happens next?

She’s not saying she wants me. She’s saying she’d stay in this place with the ten of us. We’re a package deal and without the agreement of the others, I don’t believe she’d just want me. How could I ever be enough as one tenth of her perfect outcome?

My fingers curl against my palm, and my calves scream to move. If I was alone, I’d pace the hallway, physically working out my frustration and anxiety, but Allie’s next to me and I’m not going to leave her to act like a crazy person who’s not in control of their own emotions.

So I lay still, focusing on my breathing as Allie touches my cheek.

“You guys have shown me what it’s like to be desired. What it’s like to be craved. You’ve all shown me how men should treat a woman. You’ve helped me get in touch with my inner wants and needs. I don’t think I’m ever going to stop being grateful for these past few days. And I still have my time with you to come...”

Allie leaves that part hanging between us like I’m not an addict for her already. Like I wouldn’t be prepared to do everything in my power to give her everything she needs.

“But what about you, Russell? What about your life? I see you on the edges of this group like you’re wearing a concrete overcoat and dragging a ball and chain. What do you want?”

I focus on the window, the only place in the room that doesn’t make me feel like the walls are closing in. What do I want? To feel like the man I used to be before I saw too much and did too much. To wipe out years of my history with a whiteboard eraser so I can imagine being happy again and feel like I deserve even a tiny scrap of joy. To have someone as sweet and pure and genuine in my life as Allie and not worry that I’d drag her down into the black hole I’m in without ever meaning to.

I could be good for her, in this group, with nine other men to fill all the gaps. I wouldn’t need to be funny because Jonas and Jimmy have that part covered. I wouldn’t need to be dominant like Theron and Carson, or sophisticated like Oliver and Stefan. I wouldn’t need to wear my heart on my sleeve like Tom and Gabe or be a peacemaker like Clay. I could just be me, and in time, maybe I could find my way back to the me I was before.

“I could want what you want,” I say. “I could make a life here.”

The truth hangs between us, a naked admission that both of us would be unprepared to reveal to the others.

It’s a heavy truth because I can’t see how either of us will get what we want.

Allie’s hand smooths over my shoulder and down the side of my arm, and it feels like reassurance, but it hurts like pity.

“I can’t fuck you,” I blurt, desperate to shove the emotional conversation far, far away. “But I can make you come, if that’s what you need. I can make you feel good and push all of this stuff out of your mind so you can sleep.”

It’s not a polished romantic offer. Stefan could have come up with something much more articulate. It’s not fun or flirty like Jonas, or sweet and understanding like Tom. It’s a fumbling and raw offer, but she takes it anyway.

It’s her hand that guides mine between her legs where she’s warm, soft and just a little slick. Not turned on yet, but ready to get that way. I could stroke her clit and turn that slickness into something more, but something takes over me. Something primal.

Getting inside her is suddenly my only focus and if I can’t do it with my cock, my fingers will have to be enough. I push one finger deep into her tight little hole until I’m in up to the knuckle and her legs drop open for more. “That feel good?” I ask, pressing against the little bundle of nerves I know will make her eyes roll. When they do, I’m swamped by a rush of addictive power that sends heat raging between my thighs. I

add another finger and pump deep, and Allie arches her back until her face is to the headboard and her throat is a long, elegant arch.

“This what you need?”

Allie moans, a breathy sound that makes my cock strain against the material of my shorts.

“You need it hard?”

“Yes.”

“You need more?”

She nods.

I add another finger and curl them, pumping deep and fast and making Allie squirm.

“You wanna come on my fingers?”

“Yes.”

I reach across with my other hand, and press a thumb to her clit, and Allie’s legs drop wider. Her breathing is raspy, her cheeks are flushed, and her tits bounce as she starts to rock her hips.

“Fuck yourself, baby. Use my fingers...let me see what you need.”

“Oh, god.”

“Come on my fingers, beautiful girl.”

“Russ.”

“Fuck, you look good.”

“I need...”

“Let go. Come for me.”

“Fuck, Russell.”

“You’re so hot. Fucking beautiful.” She’s struggling like it’s not quite enough, and I know how she feels. I want more. We both need more. But penetrative sex is out of the question. “Sit on my face, beautiful. I need to taste you.”

I don’t realize I’m saying the words out loud until Allie scrambles up and straddles my chest. Her face and neck are flushed with desire, and her nipples are so hard beneath her nightgown they could cut glass. She lowers her hips and I lift my head, and she’s so close, so fucking close.

“Russell,” she moans. “I need...”

“You want it, baby? You need it? Take it.”

“I don’t know how.”

“Just move your hips and find what feels good. Use me, honey.”

She rocks against my chin, and the smell of her desire, the sight of her need, is going to be the death of me.

“Russ, I don’t....”

“Take it, beautiful. Take whatever you need.”

And then she does. Her hips start to move against my mouth and tongue, and her hands grip the headboard as she rides my face. The feel of her wetness makes me so fucking hard, and the urge to take my cock in my hand and jerk myself off is overwhelming. In one easy movement, I stuff my hand into my shorts and grip my dick, tugging it roughly.

“Jesus, Russ,” she hisses, trying to stay quiet even when she’s so close. “Oh yes. Oh, fuck. I’m coming. I’m coming.”

The sound of her pleasure is almost enough to make me blow my load, and I have to pull my hand from my dick, because if I keep going, I’m going to lose it and come all over my stomach.

When Allie’s done, her body slumps over mine, her thighs clamped around my head, her forehead resting on the wall above the bed. She’s panting and gasping, her body twitching with aftershocks, and I just lie still and hold her around her ass, patting her in a way I hope is reassuring.

“Oh, god, Russell. That was. I mean. Holy shit.”

“Shh. I’ve got you, beautiful. I’m here.”

“You made me.”

“Yeah.”

“I did that. Jesus.”

“Shh. Relax.”

“Russ.”

“Don’t try to speak, beautiful. Just breathe.” She scrambles down fast, as though she’s worried that I’m the one who can’t breathe. I don’t tell her that this moment, with the most private part of her body spread over my face, is the best of my whole fucking life.

“Can I watch you?” She twists to look at where my cock is still a flaming bar, cupped by my motionless hand.

I should say no. This high school fooling around isn’t right for grown people. But there’s something undeniably attractive



about starting small and building up. Why race to the finish line when the run up can be this satisfying? “Yes.”

“Touch it for me. Make yourself come.”

““Fuck, Allie.”

“Do it, Russell.”

I grab my cock again and begin to jerk it. My hips rise and fall, pushing my dick through the tunnel of my fist, and then I’m lost. I masturbate like I do when I’m alone. No care that Allie’s watching or what she’s thinking. No shame about my need for release. Allie’s eyes, her body, her presence is so intense. Her hand that drifts down the ladder of my abs is the best kind of tease. Her words are too much. My balls tighten, and my thighs burn, and my dick is so hard it aches for release.

“I’m going to come,” I groan. “I’m going to come.”

“Let it go. Let it all go.”

“Allie.” I gasp her name like the last word of a dying man.  
“Baby.”

“That’s it.”

“Beautiful girl. Fuck...I’m coming.” And I am. I am, and it’s the biggest release of my life. My body spasms like it’s pulsing with an electric charge. Knowing she’s watching just makes everything more intense.

Afterwards, I can’t even look at her, but somehow, Allie knows to get the damp washcloth from the bathroom and wipe down my abs and chest.

“Are you okay?” she asks.

I can't tell her that I feel like she opened my chest and took out my heart. I don't tell her that waiting for Oliver to take his turn with her is like a knife to my soul. "You should sleep now." I pull her against me, tuck her face into my chest and pray that she'll sleep, because I don't have it in me to answer any more questions or face up to any more truths.

I don't have it in me to deny her if she asks for more.

The night is for dreaming, so that's what we'll do.



## ALLIE

When I wake, Russell isn't in my bed, and I hate the emptiness he's left behind. He came to me when I needed him, and he gave me everything he could without betraying the other men in the house. Russell is honorable and good. He's the kind of foundation to build a life on, but I can tell he doesn't believe that about himself.

I'm sticky, so I take a quick shower and throw on a purple two-piece with gold chain detail, and a pair of gold heeled sandals. In the mirror I look like a girl playing at being a rich woman who summers in Monaco, but I don't change or cover up. The outfit feels like a costume, which feels right because I'm playing at being a different person after all.

Only three days left and then this experience is all over.

Only three days left to complete my article and prove to Kirsty and Grace that I can manage my job well without their help.

Only three days left with these men, and then I have to walk away.

I take my computer, phone and notepad, and head down to grab some coffee and find a quiet spot to write. I find a small wooden table flanked by two matching chairs under a pergola by the gate to the beach. The fence is cut away next to it and covered with an area of latticed wood to allow the view of the water to be appreciated. It's the perfect spot to think, the perfect spot to grasp the size of the world and put everything

else into perspective. I set up my computer and stare out at the ocean, inhaling a deep breath to try to center my thoughts.

But everything I talked about with Russell last night is still there.

I must have been half asleep when I admitted that I'd choose to stay here if it was an option. I hadn't even admitted that part to myself. I must have been half-crazed from the dream or drunk on the scent of his skin. That's the only thing that could explain such stupidity and naivety. Of course, that isn't an option. Russell must have run off after we fooled around together because he realized I sounded crazy. I'm chewing the end of my pen, trying to figure out how to continue with the article I've already started drafting when my phone rings and Kirsty's name pops up on the screen. I'm so nervous, I drop it and nearly knock over the mug of coffee I've made.

"Oh, hi. Hi."

"Hi, Allie." She sounds a bit surprised by my response. "Is everything okay?"

"Yes. Sorry. I was just thinking, and you scared the shit out of me."

"Thinking? Or writing?"

"Thinking and writing."

She laughs, but it sounds strained. "Did something happen yesterday with Grace?"

Oh shit. I grab the edge of the table, needing to ground myself. "No. Why?"

“Well, I expected her to hang out with you all day after traveling so far. But she said she didn’t stay long.”

“She didn’t.” I pause, searching for what to say next. “There was really no need for her to come all this way.”

“You seemed flustered when I was there with Jonathan. Even he said it. I thought Grace could help you get things under control.”

“Everything is definitely under control.”

“Really?” Her voice sounds high, as though she’s struggling to hide her emotions. “Grace said you seemed overwhelmed by the group.”

Of all the things Grace could have said about what she saw, me being overwhelmed isn’t one of them. Maybe she was worried that Jonas’s cock was too much for me, I think wryly, and snort before I consider how inappropriate that would sound on a business call.

“Something on your mind?” Kirsty asks.

“I’m definitely not overwhelmed. I’m handling everything like a pro.” I have to bite my lip while I wait for her reply.

“I want to see something today. And I’m going to send you the photographer’s images. They look great.”

“You’ll get something today. A draft. But I still have more interviewing to do.” Oliver, my mind whispers. Oliver then Russell, without any restrictions. The awareness I feel between my legs is both exciting and frustrating. Exciting because I know that any urges I feel today can be satisfied. Frustrating because I know that once I leave this house, I’m on my own again.

*At least I'll have the memories to remember them by.*

But I can't keep ten huge purple cocks in my closet. What happens if I get run over and my parents need to clean out my things?

*Why the hell do you care what your parents find in your closet after you're dead? So, let them think you're a kinky freak with a size fetish.*

"Allie."

"Yes."

"I said, let me know which of the photos you think will work best for the cover and to complement the article."

"I will."

Kirsty doesn't bother to say goodbye. She rarely does. Too busy for niceties. She probably learned that withholding goodbyes makes a person appear more in control at a 'how to be a bitch in business' conference. I vow never to be that person, no matter how far up the ladder I climb.

I finish my coffee, keeping my eyes trained on the ocean, smiling as Natalie and her little family walk past. She doesn't see me in my secluded little spot, and I don't call out a greeting. It's so sweet to just watch them together, living life, enjoying each other's company. The men walk around her like she's the center of their universe. The kids run and laugh, with three dads who are eager to play with them. I'm a career girl right now, but I want the life that Natalie has. I want the security that comes with love, and the joy that comes with children.

I should focus my attention on the article, but instead my mind wanders, conjuring little faces of children I'll never have with the men still sleeping upstairs. Little boys with pretty light eyes and blond curls. Little girls with serious brows, round faces and straight noses. I imagine them snuggled against the muscular chests of their daddies, or tossed high into the air while they squeal with laughter. I imagine Russell reading them stories at bedtime and Jonas tickling them until they can't breathe. Clay would sort out their disagreements, and Stefan and Oliver would teach them impeccable manners. Tom and Gabe would soothe their cut knees and Jimmy would forge their love of sport. Carson would color with them, drawing fierce dragons and pretty princesses. Theron would build them tree houses and little wooden cars to ride around in.

Together, they would create the perfect family.

And me?

That's where it all falls down because I might dream about staying with all of them and forging an unconventional but happy life like Dawn and Natalie, and all the other women who find love that way. But that's me wanting to have my cake and eat it too. A ten to one ratio is great for the one but not so great for the ten. All these men have their own lives and their own dreams. I cannot become a deluded woman pining for something that just cannot be.

All I can do is keep my heart trained on what can be. I have three days left to enjoy being with these men. I can live out every fantasy I'll ever have and fill my memory bank with so



much happiness and fulfillment to warm the colder days ahead.

Focus, I tell my wandering brain. I'll write whatever I need to keep Kirsty off my back. And then I'll enjoy, because the clock is ticking.



**ALLIE**

“Check out these photos,” I say to Jonas and Jimmy, who are sprawled out on the low tan leather couches in matching poses like sexy bookends, focused on their phones. I step over Jimmy’s outstretched legs and flop onto the seat between them, resting my open laptop on my knees. The men, who both smell amazing, and are permanently disarmingly gorgeous, lean in to view the screen more clearly.

“That’s us!” Jonas shifts closer, pressing his thigh against the full length of mine, and I’m immediately flustered. “Damn. We look hot.”

“We do. Like a poster for Hot Boys Down Under, or whatever that male stripper group is called.”

“I think you know too much about male strippers for a heterosexual man.”

Jimmy shoots his friend a look laced with daggers and uses his middle finger to ease the mouse down, filling me with all kinds of filthy thoughts about other places his capable finger could stroke.

“They’re all hot,” I say. “But I need to pick one for the magazine cover, and at least four for the internal spread.”

“This one. This one is fire.” Jonas jabs his finger at the screen, choosing the one that is my favorite. Jonathan, the photographer, captured a cute shot of all the men sitting with their legs dangling into the pool, some on one side, some on the other and me at the center of the group.

“What are you looking at?” Oliver carries his cup of coffee, taking up residence behind us. I twist to stare up at him and

from this angle, he looks like a roman general with his tan skin, neat beard and straight nose. He sips the coffee, his eyes fixed on the pictures as though he's assessing war strategy. When I twist back to look at the photo, I suddenly notice he's missing from the shot we were talking about.

"How are you not in this picture?" I take over the mouse pad, skimming through the others.

"I must have been taking a call."

"This one could work." Jonas taps his finger on the screen.

"Which one?" Oliver leans over the back of the couch, his forearm brushing against my neck. "I'm not in that one either, but that's okay. I don't mind not being in the pictures."

"How am I supposed to choose a photo reflecting an article about ten men talking about their ten inches if all the group pictures only have nine men in them?"

"The wonders of Photoshop." Jonas sounds so blasé, like it's an easy process to add a man to five pictures in different settings with varied lighting.

"But I don't get it. Kirsty was here. She clearly briefed Jonathan. How could he go ahead and shoot so many images and not feature Oliver in...?" I scan more of the pictures. The only time Oliver has been captured in a picture is with his back to the camera and he's fully clothed. There's no way that would work for photoshop.

"...most of these shots. Shit. I'm going to need you to sit on the edge of the pool," I say. "And I'll take a picture and send it to Kirsty. I think that's the only way we can rectify this disaster

before she becomes apoplectic. She must not have noticed the omission either.”

“It’s not your fault.” Jimmy rests his hand on my knee.

“That doesn’t ever seem to make much difference.”

“Get in your Speedos then.” Jonas nods in Oliver’s direction, but Mr. Evasive’s attention has moved to his phone screen.

“Sorry. I have to deal with this.” Pressing his phone to his ear, Oliver finds a corner near the front door to have a very long conversation in hushed tones. I twist my ear in that direction to try to overhear, but Jimmy and Jonas are too interested in assessing which of the images makes them look sexier, and I can’t hear anything over their hilarious banter. In the end, I give up and we pick images that will work for inside the magazine including an artsy still life of the purple dildos next to a bowl of fruit. Throughout the process, the other men in the group come and go, leaving their comments and preferences for me to take into consideration.

Later, after I email Kirsty to explain the issues and suggest the pictures that might work, I find Oliver swimming lengths in the pool. Russell, Theron, Tom, and Gabe are all stretched out in the sun. I slowly lower myself down the stairs and into the water, waiting for Oliver to surface so that I can talk to him. When he sees me, he brushes his hands over his wet hair and over his face.

“Hey.” There’s a wariness in his tone that confuses me.

“Can I take the photo now?”

“It’s a beautiful day.” He swims closer until he’s near enough to touch me. Except he doesn’t. He rests an arm either side of me, on the ledge, boxing me in. “Shouldn’t we make the most of it?”

“My boss is...”

“We’ll get it done later. We have time. And I’m sure your boss will be fine.”

The words I need to persuade him die on the tip of my tongue as he moves even closer, his body filling my vision.

“Hey, Oliver. You’re next,” Theron yells. He’s still taking his role as organizer very seriously, but it’s almost like he’s forgotten that discussing sex like it’s a menu item is going to affect me.

Oliver presses his lips together until they’re a thin line. “I know.”

Theron lifts his sunglasses and peers at Oliver, maybe sensing something’s off, too.

“You don’t sound happy,” I whisper, watching his regal face for a reaction that will give away his true feelings.

“I’m always happy.” A quick smile doesn’t quite meet his eyes. And then he fills his chest with a breath that seems tense.

“Then why do you sound pissed off?”

“I’m not.”

“Okay.” I switch my gaze to Theron, who is now sitting up, watching our interaction. Being rejected with an audience isn’t my idea of fun and I don’t get how Oliver moves so easily

between funny, clever and caring, and wary and dismissive. He's like Jekyll and Hyde. Oliver moves his head so close to mine, our noses almost touch.

"You're a brilliant woman," he whispers, "Too brilliant for this assignment. You should be writing about things that really matter in the world. Things that inspire you."

So that's what he's thinking about when Theron is nudging him in the direction of sex. I jerk my head back, surprised at the change of direction. "That's...I...thank you, I guess."

"So, what's stopping you?"

I twist, wanting to escape from the serious focus of his gaze on me. I know he thinks he's being complementary and a friend, but the press of his questions is like a physical weight on my neck. Oliver takes a step back, giving me space, but then he reaches for my hand beneath the water.

Swiveling, I face him head on. "You know, you don't have to do this, Oliver, if you don't want to. Russell waited for you to claim me out of honor, but if you'd rather talk about how disappointed you are that I'm writing about cock rather than world politics, we can just skip it."

Pulling on my hand, he twists me to face him, regret furrowing his brow. "Hey, I'm sorry, okay. I'm used to mentoring people younger than me. This is...the age gap has me feeling all kinds of ways."

"The age gap isn't a thing," I tell him. "At least, it wasn't for Stefan."

"Maybe he wants you to call him daddy," Jonas yells out of nowhere from the side of the pool, helpful as always at



reducing tense moments. When Oliver opens his mouth, Jonas puts his hand up. "Don't even try to deny it."

"I don't," Oliver says, but his pupils spread with a telltale darkness that shows me the truth. "I just want you to know your potential." When I look away, he places a hand on my cheek. "I want what you want." His soft nod and a smile that flickers at the edges of his lips don't convince me one hundred percent. Still, the way he cradles my hand is tender and the space he gives me is respectful.

"Allie wants you," Theron yells. "Why'd you have to make this more complicated than it is?"

"Do you?" There's something about the way Oliver asks me that feels big, like my answer will push aside more than just his own reasons for being uncertain. I get his reticence. Where the other men have jumped into this crazy proposal feet first, Oliver is mature and a thinker. He probably deliberates as much as I do before making a decision. Our similarities only make me feel warmer towards him.

For all his uncertainty about this week, he's always been caring and had my best interests at heart. I believe he'd push aside his own wants and desires if he thought they would hurt me in any way. The way he took care of me on the first day before any of the sex stuff was tender and considerate. I believe that's the man he is under all of the formality and seriousness.

"Of course," I say. I couldn't single him out for rejection any more than I could the other men in the group.

Oliver's eyes glaze but he's still braced like he's ready to fight rather than fuck.

I need to jolt him out of his overprotective tendencies so he can take what I know he wants. Maybe Jonas is right about what turns Oliver on. He's been right about a lot.

"Daddy," I whisper, keeping my eyes fixed on Oliver's chest, and my pussy flutters between my legs.

"Fuck." Oliver's mouth is on mine before I can utter another word, his tongue invading, his hand gripping my chin and cheeks so he can angle my face exactly the way he wants to. His body presses me hard against the wall of the pool, his lean thigh shoving up against my clit. His arousal, all ten inches of it, is a bar of intent against my belly.

He pulls back, breathing hard. "Say it again."

"Fuck me, Daddy."

"Allie." My name is a strangled whisper on his lips. His fingers play with the top of my bikini, sliding the fabric over my skin a little at a time until it snags on my nipple. He pauses, his eyes feasting on the roundness of my breast. "Just a little more and..." It's like he's giving himself instructions, forcing himself to go further than he ever thought he would. He tugs and my nipple pops out.

"That's it," I say, breathless.

"Fuck." When his hot mouth latches on and sucks hard, I throw my head back, relishing the tug between my legs. His hand skims the surface of the water and slides beneath. The loss of contact is enough to make me cry out, but then his hand is between my legs.

"Oh." I spread them a little more.

"Do it," someone calls.

“Make her yours.”

Oliver’s mouth finds mine, capturing it in a kiss. His tongue slips inside, and I suck on it, tasting him, wanting him. For a man so restrained in life, he’s the opposite when it comes to sex. I wrap my hands around his neck, holding him in place as his fingers stroke the outer lips of my pussy, spreading them open. He’s teasing me and it’s driving me insane.

“Please.”

“Daddy’s got you.” He thrusts two fingers inside, the suddenness making me moan against his mouth. He curls them forward, hitting that sweet spot, and then he thrusts again, and again. The sound of my moans are muffled by his kisses.

“Yes,” Jonas says. “You got her. Take her. Make her yours.”

“Oh, God.”

“Come for me, Allie.”

His fingers slide deeper and harder, fucking me, filling me. His mouth moves to my ear, whispering words of encouragement and desire, telling me what a good girl I am, how tight and wet and perfect. He tells me he loves to hear the sounds of my pleasure and how I should let go and come for him.

*For him.* Those words are a whisper of dominance and control that trips a switch in my brain.

“You can’t resist me,” he whispers, kissing the soft skin beneath my ear, leaving his hesitancy far behind. “You don’t have the strength to deny your desires.”

“No.”

“And when you come, you’ll call my name. Say it.”

“Oliver. Yes. Yes!”

He thrusts hard and deep, and I shatter, coming all over his hand, moaning his name, limp and replete. My head falls back, my eyes rolling closed, and Oliver’s lips capture my throat, kissing and sucking as I ride the waves of pleasure.

When I finally open my eyes, Oliver’s are wild with lust and his chest is heaving. When I drop my eyes to the rippled outline of his cock through the water, it’s huge inside the clingy material of his swimmers.

“Please.”

He turns me until I’m facing the pool edge, knocking my ankles with his demanding foot until my legs are spread.

Oliver yanks at the bottom of my bikini, pulling it aside.

He pushes his shorts down, freeing his cock. I reach behind me, wrapping my fingers around his length, squeezing it and pumping it a few times.

So many eyes rest on me. So many men are playing witness to this, but I’m used to being watched by now. I’m used to imagining they want to be the one between my legs.

“Fuck,” Oliver groans. The same word is on the tip of my tongue, but I trap it between my teeth. When I release his cock, he wraps his arms around me, crushing my body against his. Then he’s lifting me, guiding me down onto his waiting cock. The pressure is incredible. His size stretches me to the point of pain, but I can’t get enough. When he’s fully

sheathed inside, I feel so full, so totally complete. He's still for a moment, allowing my pussy to get used to his girth.

"Condom," Jonas yells and Oliver goes to pull out, but I reach around and hold his hip, keeping him deep inside me.

"I'm clean and on birth control," I say.

"I'm clean, too."

"Don't come in the pool," Theron warns. "I'm not spending the rest of my vacation swimming in your spunk."

Oliver doesn't hear or doesn't care. "That's right. Push back on my cock."

And then he's moving, bouncing me against his hips, thrusting into me from behind. I reach up and thread my fingers through his hair, pulling his head toward me. I twist until our mouths connect, our tongues collide, and he thrusts over and over.

"You like that."

"Yes. Please. Harder"

"I'll fuck you," he says. "And I'm going to fill this tight little pussy with my cum. And when I do, everyone is going to know what a good little girl you've been."

"Oh, god."

"Tell me, Allie. Tell me you're my good girl."

"Yes. I'm your good girl. I'm such a good girl. Fill me. Fill me up."

He groans, his mouth capturing my neck. He licks and sucks and then bites me and as I cry out, he fucks me faster.

Feet appear in front of me on the pool's edge and huge hands grip me beneath my armpits. "I'm lifting her out," Theron says and then I'm tugged upwards and out of the water, leaving Oliver behind.

"What?" I gasp as Theron's mouth crashes onto mine. He grips my face between his huge hands so we're eye to eye. "I said, no coming in the pool. That shit is gross."

Oliver pushes himself up and out of the water in one graceful motion, leaving trails of water slicked over his whole body. He's naked, his shorts left behind at the bottom of the pool, his cock an angry-looking bar.

Jimmy appears in the house doorway, flanked by Carson, Clay and Stefan. It's as though they felt the pull of my nakedness just at the right time to tempt me.

Shirtless and packed with muscle, I scan over each one, finding rippling abs and rounded pecs, broad shoulders, and biceps like basketballs. I find thick thighs, swirling ink and most importantly smiles that warm my heart.

"Bring her over here," Gabe says. He's spread a towel over the outside table. Theron needs no further instruction. He lifts me like a bride he's going to carry over the threshold and strides across to the table.

"Am I lunch?" I ask, thinking about all the feasting we've done together at this table.

"The best kind of main course." Theron lays me out, tugging my bikini bottoms over my legs and unsnapping my bikini top fastening. Turning to Oliver, he nods and takes a step back. "She's all yours, man."

Jonas tosses a condom over me, which Oliver catches. Maybe I've become a deviant, but the idea of getting messy with these men is actually a huge turn on. But I don't stop Oliver from wrapping his dick and when he bends between my legs to lick me, I don't stop that either.

"Yes," I gasp, reaching for his hair and threading my fingers through it. "Yes..."

In a frenzy, Oliver pulls back and enters me so fast and hard, it forces the breath from my lungs.

"Oh god. Oh god," I gasp, scrambling for purchase on the table beneath me. His fingers bite into my hips as he tugs me deeper onto his cock. His eyes are closed, his brow furrowed with concentration. To the right of me, Jonas leans in to kiss my lips. "You're a goddess," he whispers. "A fucking goddess."

And I feel like one. I'm Aphrodite, goddess of love, reveling in the worship of ten men. I'm Helen of Troy, tempting men to forget all of their inhibitions to be with me, and corrupted by the passions of the men around me. I'm all the women who've come before me, who've owned their sexuality and been unafraid.

And I'm going to come. "Oh...I'm...I'm...."

My head falls back as Oliver presses his body to mine, his teeth sinking into my shoulder as he swells inside me. The bite of pain, mixed with the intense pleasure, is enough to bring tears to my eyes. Oliver thrusts a few more times, his body shuddering with his release, and then he goes still, holding me in his arms, his lips pressed against the throbbing pain on my shoulder.

I allow the waves of my orgasm to subside, and Oliver to relax, and when the last soft pulse of pleasure runs through me, I remember what's coming next.

Russell, and maybe more.

Would the rest of them want that?

Would I be able to take them all?

This proposal has been a personal challenge for me, one that I've overcome and overcome, time after time. Three more days and then there will be no more chances. Could I overcome this too? Could I drive away all the inhibitions I have to become the center point of ten men? Am I ready for that? This is my one opportunity to find out what it's like to live Dawn's life. It's a now or never moment.

The men around me are watching as the cogs turn in my head.

*You can do this, my internal voice whispers. They'll take care of you. They'll make it feel so good you'll probably end up dying from all the orgasms. They'll treat you like a queen and you'll know what it feels to be like to live a life according to your own rules.*

They're all so different but somehow so perfect for me.

*I want all of them, I admit to myself. All of them at the same time so there is nothing coming between us anymore. So we're truly one big group, united by the greatest pleasure known to humankind.*

My mouth is so dry that my tongue has adhered to the roof of my mouth just from thinking about overwhelming sex,



about being out of control, of being claimed and owned everywhere until there's no separation between any of us.

At least, that's how Dawn describes her everyday life.

It's something they've never asked for, but something I want to give them.

I close my eyes and inhale the sweet summer air, and under all their scrutiny I'm light and insubstantial. A wisp of a person who needs a steady hand to keep her safe.

*You want this. You need this.*

One down.

Nine to go.

Will I be able to take them all?

There's only one way to find out.



## JIMMY

Oliver staggers back as though his knees are weak from his release, and slumps into a chair, but I focus back on Allie immediately. She's spread out on the table, her naked body glistening in the sunshine like an angel who has dropped from the heavens. She draws her legs together and rests an arm across her breasts, suddenly shy. But before she has a chance to start thinking too much and remember the inhibitions that kept her a virgin for so long, I step forward to kiss her. My buddy Jonas is next to me, running his fingers up her neck, playing with her hair while she comes back from her orgasm induced state.

"Are you okay to keep going?" I ask her.

Allie moistens her lips and nods, so I slide my hand over her belly slowly, taking my time before I cup her breasts. Around us, there's a murmur of approval that spurs me on. These men really enjoy watching. Her nipples are so sweet. All I want to do is suck on them, so I do.

"Don't forget Russell's next," Jonas reminds me.

When Russell is done, will Allie want to stop, or will we all get a chance to get close to her again?

"Russell, man. You're up." It's Theron, who makes sure we're all falling into line.

"I don't know." Russell runs his hand over his head, staring at Allie like she's a steak and he's been on a water fast for

three weeks. "This is a lot." How he's holding himself back right now, I don't know.

"What don't you know?" I ask.

"This. It's so impersonal."

Russell's jaw ticks as he grits his teeth. Then, with a determination that is all his own, he picks Allie up from the table and makes his way over to the rattan sofa by the pool. When she's in his lap, it's only then that he removes his sunglasses.

"I want this to be just us," he says. "For our first time."

"That's okay." Allie touches his face and Russell's eyes roll closed. Theron passes her a condom, and she takes control, reaching for Russell's cock and sheathing it with more skill than I gave her credit for.

Oliver's already opened her up, so she slides onto Russell's huge dick with no resistance, and they both moan in sync at the sensation.

Jonas steps closer to watch, taking a seat opposite them so he has an excellent view of the ridiculously deep penetration.

"Russell." Allie's voice is a whisper as she rolls her hips. Russell never takes his eyes from hers. He doesn't urge her with greedy hands the way Carson would, or thrust up into her the way I'd be tempted to do. He lets her do her thing, keeping an intense connection between them.

Russell might be grumpy and surly, but he knows women.

"That feel good?" he asks, and Allie nods, gripping tighter to his shoulders. Russell wraps his arms around her back so

they're chest to chest and her face is buried in his neck. Only then does he help her move.

"Oh, oh," she gasps, as their bodies are mashed together.

"Jeez." Tom flops onto the seat next to Jonas, shaking his head. "That's quite a show."

I grab my cock, giving it a well-needed squeeze, as heat surges through my balls at the sight of Allie rocking on Russell's dick. It's too much arousal for me to take without some stimulation.

"Oh fuck, baby," Russell cries out as Allie goes limp in his arms. He comes just as she does and it's as intense and personal as sex could possibly be with nine happy spectators.

After, he takes her face tenderly in his hands and kisses her mouth like he's sipping champagne. "You're so precious," he says. "So beautiful." And then he goes one step further. "Whatever happens tomorrow or the next day, just know I will always remember the moments I've shared with you."

I expect Jonas to jump in with a hilarious quip, but he doesn't. When I glance at my friend, he has his hand pressed over his heart. Jeez. Even Jonas is starting to show signs of understanding the intensity of these moments.

Russell takes his time but he's not a greedy man. When Allie is fully recovered, he finds Theron in the crowd and nods. Then he asks Allie, "Are you done or are you ready for more?"

With a small but determined nod, she confirms she is. Theron reaches out to take her hand, and when she eases herself from Russell's cock, her knees are too weak to hold her up. Theron scoops her into his arms and carries her back

to the table, kissing her as he rests her on the edge. “Two down,” he murmurs against her neck. “Eight more to go, if that’s what you want. If it gets too much, you can tap out at any time. Okay?”

“I’m not tapping out,” she says, reaching for his dick. Theron was not expecting her touch, and he gasps like a man plunged into a frozen lake.

“Shit, Allie.”

“Are my hands cold?” She laughs at his moment of weakness.

“Not cold. Just a surprise.”

“I’m making up for lost time.” She slides her hands over his abs, up to his chest and around his neck, trailing pictures onto his skin. Her expression is lazy, her eyes glazed and intoxicated. They kiss in the same deep way Russell kissed her and I move closer as Theron urges Allie onto her back. Clay nears too, taking a place to the left of Allie, close to her head. I see what he wants before he suggests it by touching her cheek and asking her to open for him. As Theron drives deep between her thighs, and Clay pushes between her pretty lips, I feast on her breasts, sucking each engorged tip into my mouth, waiting to take my turn to send her into the stratosphere. I focus on her body as each man reaches his release.

Allie’s slick and warm when I get between her legs, and her soft brown eyes are glazed with relaxed pleasure. “You ready for more?” I ask, already knowing the answer. She’s insatiable. Her hand reaches out like she’s searching for me in the dark,

touching my cheek. "Jimmy." The smile on her face is half drunk but perfectly brilliant.

"Yeah, baby. I'm here."

I move but not fast. I want to prolong our time together. I don't care about the others waiting. Allie deserves gentleness as well as passion. She deserves for us to take time with her pleasure. She deserves the very best of all of us.

"You feel good," she whispers, pulling me closer for a kiss. It's featherlight, and so sugar-sweet, I have to lick my lips after. I kiss her deeper, losing myself in her mouth, holding her close against me so we're sliding against each other, skin slick and bodies so hot I feel like I'm going to spontaneously combust. Jonas moves closer, but I warn him off with a sharp look that he understands immediately.

It's stupid to feel like I do. To want this moment to be just between me and Allie, a memory we can treasure like a secret when this time together is past. This is supposed to be group sex. It's supposed to be about Allie's experience, but I want her all to myself, even for just this moment of connection.

It would be different if I knew we had a future.

I feel her nearing climax as her nails dig into my skin and her neck arches, and I want to orgasm at the same time. I palm her breasts, dipping my face into her neck and inhaling her sweet scent as I thrust into her harder and faster.

My release is a tsunami as she ripples around me, milking me for everything I am and everything I'll ever be.

I thought Oliver looked wrecked after, but I'm destroyed. I don't want to leave her warmth. I don't want to kiss her and

withdraw knowing this might never happen again.

I don't want to say goodbye.

Not now. Not ever.

But I have to because Allie's not mine. She's not any of ours. We're just pawns in this game and she's the queen.

Jonas touches me on the shoulder, maybe sensing that I don't know how to walk away. "We've still got time," he says softly in my ear.

"Time?" I blink, confused. I slip from inside Allie and manage to walk two steps as Jonas shadows me.

"Time to make her want us for more than just our big dicks."

His words are like a knife.

We've had conversations about objectification but it's not until Jonas states it so clearly that I feel it here.

Does size matter?

Size is what brought us all together. But there has to be more to all this for Allie, doesn't there?





## ALLIE

Hands softly squeeze my breasts and find my nipples. Lips kiss my calves and then the inside of my thighs. I'm so slick between my legs, and so over sensitized, too. I've lost count of how many times these men have brought me to the precipice and pushed me over into blissful oblivion.

I look down and see Tom kneeling between my legs. Our eyes meet, and when he smiles against my clit, I start to tremble. The rasp of his beard against my tender flesh makes my toes curl. Around me, Gabe, Jonas, Stefan and Carson stand, their hands greedy, their eyes even greedier. The rest are close too, watching while they rest, their turns already taken. Everyone is naked despite the outside location. The sheer amount of sexy, tan, lean muscle around is hard to describe in a way that would do it justice. I think I could come just from looking at them and thinking about what their bodies can do.

I think there's a danger they might break my brain if we go any further.

"Lick her, again," Jonas orders. Tom doesn't need instruction, though. He settles in, taking the task at hand as seriously as a heart attack.

"She tastes so damned good," he murmurs, and my cheeks heat. How do I taste good after already having so much sex?

"I remember," Stefan says, nuzzling my neck. His warm breath sends my pulse racing as Tom's tongue flicks over my

swollen clit.

There's another murmur of appreciation as I groan and shift my hips. They all love it when my body loses control. The grabbier I am and the more I writhe, the better they like it.

I reach for Tom's head, but Stefan secures me by the wrist and tugs my arm over my head, holding it against the table. I like the control he exerts, the little bite of domination.

I like the idea that I don't have a choice. Tom is going to feast on me whether I want him to or not.

But oh, I want him too. I want him to so badly that I could cry.

Stefan presses a kiss against my damp forehead. "Does that feel good, princess?"

"So good," I moan.

"Do you want his cock?"

"YES!"

A rumble of laughter cuts through the gentle music still playing in the background. These men seem to like it even more when I'm begging and pleading for their dicks.

A condom is tossed at Tom, and he wraps his perfect cock, fixing me with glazed chestnut eyes that swim with kindness.

Hands stroke my hips and belly and tease my nipples as Tom lines himself up for penetration. I should be used to the feeling of being filled by now, but every time one of these men pushes inside me, it's as overwhelming as the first.

Stefan's lips find mine, and he kisses me as though he wants to climb inside me and never leave. With my free hand,

I cup his cheek and he stares at me for seconds that feel like minutes, with a question I can't decipher in his eyes.

"She's getting close," Tom says, as someone pinches my nipple hard. "Her pussy is pulsing."

"Fuck." Gabe sounds desperate, and I don't blame him. Waiting for so long and watching so many other people come must be tough.

Fingers grip into my ass, holding me tight against Tom's cock, and I want to wriggle, but I can't.

"That's it," Stefan urges. "Fuck her until she breaks."

And I'm so close...so unbelievably close.

Then Tom rests my feet on his chest and leans forward, practically folding me in two, and I see stars. "Oh...oh...oh... fuuuuuck."

Someone laughs at my lack of eloquence, but not for the first time since I started having sex with these men, I'm lost for words.

I'm still reeling, when Tom comes, and someone takes his place.

"Gabe's going to fuck you now," Stefan whispers.

"Unless she wants more?" Gabe's question has my mind spinning, not because the suggestion of more is new to me. Theron and Jonas shared me that way. And Clay, Gabe and Tom before. It's because we're out in the open and whatever I do is being observed by so many men.

But I trust them.

I trust them to keep me safe.

There are four men left. Four men.

It sounds impossible, but I know it isn't.

I turn to Stefan and reach for him. "What is it, Allie?"

"Four," I say, nodding. He understands immediately.

"Gabe, switch places with Allie."

Like choreographed dancers, we get into position, Gabe on his back and me straddling him. Carson touches my hip and takes his place behind me. Jonas stands on the other side of the table facing Stefan.

I lower myself slowly onto Gabe's waiting cock, knowing how hard, thick, and good he's going to feel.

My back arches, and lips find my breasts again. Jonas, holding his cock at the root, approaches me.

"Suck it, baby," he says. It's not an order as such, but I fantasize that it is. He moves closer, and I open my mouth. He tastes salty-sweet and hot, evidence of his excitement. He's so huge, and the angle is a challenge, but he knows just how to control the rhythm to make it manageable for me.

The pressure of Carson's cock against my entrance makes me gasp, and Stefan's hand runs down the length of my spine, working to soothe me. "It's okay, Allie. You know what to do. Just relax."

"That's it," Oliver says in a voice that is more composed of hushed awe than anything I've ever heard him say before. "That's it, Allie. You're such a good girl for us."

The stretch as Carson works his way inside me is so intense that I have to brace my hands on either side of Gabe's neck,

and pant.

“That’s it,” Gabe repeats. “Just breathe. You’ve got this. You know how good it’s going to feel.”

Carson fucks me with long, slow strokes that make my toes curl. I can feel the beginnings of another orgasm building, but I know my own body. I don’t think I’m going to be able to come so soon. Jonas is close, though. I can taste his arousal and feel the swell of his cock and the tremble of his thighs. He goes to pull away, but I grab him to let him know I’m okay to swallow. He groans like a dying man, gripping my head so I can’t move over his sensitized cock as he spills into my throat. When he lets me go, he flops back into a chair, and I grin proudly at how weak I made him with just my lips and my tongue.

Carson’s hands grip my hips so hard I know they’ll bruise, but I don’t mind. The bite of pain just makes the pleasure so much more intense. I take Stefan’s cock in my hand, letting him slip through the ring of my fingers, over and over. A guttural moan builds in Carson’s throat, and I know that he’s close. The thrust of him inside me feels so good and as he thickens and pulses, the stretch gets even more intense.

Gabe’s face is strained. How he’s remaining so still, I don’t understand. “Fuck, Allie.” He grits his teeth, and he stares up at me. “You have no idea how this feels.”

And he’s right. I don’t. A woman’s perspective on sex will never be the same as a man’s. The physical sensations are different. The emotional connection is different. At least that’s what I think. We take men inside our bodies. That has to be different than being the one who pushes to enter.

“I’m close,” Carson warns.

“Me too.” Gabe’s hands rest against my breasts, squeezing, and the connection is like a live wire to my clit.

I urge Stefan forward so I can blow him, wanting to bring us all over the edge together. It’s a foolish aim. Too difficult to achieve, but I try regardless.

He’s so thick in my mouth. My jaw aches as his thighs tremble and he grips the edge of the table to retain some control.

“That’s it,” he says as I swirl my tongue around the head. “That’s it.”

The feel of him coming in my mouth is enough to trip my body into ecstasy, and behind me, Carson cries out so loudly, I’m certain the neighbors will hear. Beneath me, Gabe can’t hold himself motionless any further. His hips thrust up as he releases into me, and I almost lose my balance with the power of his movements.

From the sidelines, Oliver tells me how well I did and what a perfect girl I am.

Jonas whistles his appreciation.

Someone else claps, and I laugh.

I laugh from deep in my belly, throwing my head back and gasping for breath. Euphoria spills from within me. It’s a release of so much tension. The perfect way to let go of all the binds I’ve tangled myself in for so long.

I’m aware of how crazy I must look but no one seems to care. They join me in my laughter, and Gabe envelopes me

into a fierce bear hug that knocks the breath from my body. I don't know how long I lay there, surrounded by the men who've shown me heaven over and over, who've proved that while size matters, it's definitely what you do with it that counts.

Within this group of men, I feel safe and free.

I finally feel what Natalie had described.

It's only when we start to disentangle and find our clothes, with the sex glow diminishing and the need for food calling, that our future separation settles into my bones like antifreeze.





# ALLIE

I wake to the sound of my phone vibrating on the nightstand. With bleary eyes, opened only a sliver, I grab for it, missing as it moves out of reach. By the time I've picked it up from where it clattered to the floor, the caller has hung up, but as I squint to see who it was, the screen lights up again.

Grace.

I really don't want to speak to her. Not after our last talk, but it's the middle of the frickin' night, my body is sore everywhere and we don't do after hours conversations, ever. I swipe to accept the call, assuming some type of work emergency, and resenting it immediately. If Kirsty has asked Grace to disturb me at this ridiculous hour about this assignment, I'll be fuming.

"Hello." My voice is sandpapery and harsh.

"Allie. Have you seen it?"

I blink in the darkness, confused. "Seem what?"

She curses in a rush. "Open your socials, Allie. Just open your socials."

The panic in her voice makes me scramble to sit. I fumble with the light switch and flick on the gold side lamp, sending a muted amber glow over the room.

I tap in my pin and open Instagram. The number of notifications I find is crazy. Following a tag, I find what Grace is referring to and my heart drops.

There in front of me is an image of me taken at the pool from above. The explicit parts of my body have been blurred out, but the men surrounding me in various stages of undress are obvious, and the sexual activity taking place is brazen.

Someone photographed me having sex with ten men.

Oh my god. Who did this?

I do a quick headcount and find that all the men in the house are present in the picture. The fact that my first instinct is to suspect one of them feels horribly disloyal when they've all been nothing but good to me.

"How?" I gasp.

"Maybe it was one of the men at the house," Grace says. "Maybe they set up a camera."

"But why?" I don't understand what their motive would be. To shame me? I've done nothing to warrant that kind of anger or desire for revenge.

"Maybe it was..."

"Hang on," I hiss, her voice grating on my last nerve as I flick through the images. "Did you see the commentary?"

"I didn't get a chance to read anything. I just called you..." Grace trails away as she starts to read.

"Oliver," I whisper.

"Oh my god." The sound of her hand slapping against her mouth ricochets through the phone.

"It's not about me. It's about him. They're trying to bring down Oliver."

“You have Oliver Paxman at the beach house?”

“Yeah,” I say. “But who is he?”

“Oh my god,” Grace repeats, and I want to scream at her to stop with the gasping and just tell me what she knows. “We just found out yesterday. Oliver Paxman is the new owner of the magazine. He inherited it from Gregory Paxman, his uncle.

I knew Gregory passed away, but his will hadn’t been made public. When I saw Oliver’s surname on his form, I thought it was a coincidence. Paxman isn’t such a rare name that I’d assume a relationship, especially under the circumstances.

“Oliver’s the owner?” I can still feel his hands on my body, the slide of his finger over my clit. The whisper of his voice in my ear telling me what a good girl I am, watching as man after man shoved their cocks inside me.

Images and conversations flash through my mind and all the times he was hesitant and uncomfortably elusive. I thought it was about respect, him feeling some level of responsibility because he was a little older, but now I know better.

He knew he held a position of authority and power over me, but he still went along with Theron’s proposal.

My free hand drifts to gather the fabric of my pajama top closer around my neck, feeling the humiliation and exposure like a rush of ice-cold liquid through every part of my body.

How could Oliver do this to me?

He encouraged me to push myself and to believe in myself. He made me think that I can be what I want to be and take

the leap I've been putting off for so long. And all the while, he knew that I work for his company.

He knew that sleeping with me would put me in an untenable position.

There's no way I can go back to work. There's no way anyone at Fine Line will take me seriously. This is it for me. No job. No career. A lifetime of effort wasted over one sexual experience.

What felt so good, so all consumingly perfect, is now tainted beyond repair.

"What am I going to do?" I ask Grace, who's still quietly reading the coverage I can no longer face.

"You need to leave that house," she says. "Get out of there. Don't wait until the morning. No long goodbyes. Who knows who is behind these pictures, Allie. Don't put yourself at any more risk."

"Now?" I whisper. The room is all shadows, and my mind is a swirling mess of panic, but I'm confident all my possessions are in my room, which should make packing easier. but even so, gathering everything in the middle of the night, and escaping this house won't be easy.

"Now, honey. Just do it. Call me when you're in the car."

I throw the sheet from over my body and swing my legs over the edge of the mattress. "Okay."

Grace hangs up, and I stare at the phone for another couple of seconds. I want to open the images again and read more, but I'm too scared. If I do, it'll become more real and the

numbness currently compressing my insides will crack open, revealing the bloody core of my shame and disappointment.

Oh god. I thought I had feelings for these men. I thought... well, I don't know what I thought. Stupid woman with ideas that don't make any sense. What kind of idiot would fantasize that they could be the center of the lives of ten men? Why the hell would they want to revolve around me? I'm not the frickin' sun.

I clasp my hands over my face, the heat of my embarrassment like an inferno against my palms.

What am I going to do?

My parents will see those images. They're linked to me on social media. Who knows how many times those images have been shared? There's no hiding what I've done.

Grace's voice rings out in my mind. I need to get out of here before I come face to face with the reality of what comes next. My little apartment is the only place I'll feel safe. I can hide away until...well, it's not going to blow over. I'll have to face it all at some point. But not now.

Now, all I can do is run.

Grabbing my suitcase, I start to empty the closet and drawers, stuffing things in with only a hasty fold. My toiletries are in disarray in the bathroom, and I have to pick up each item and deposit it into bags as quietly as I can. My work stuff is easy to pack, but then I'm faced with the gathering of purple dildos still braced together on my nightstand. What the hell am I going to do with them?

Take them with me? They're evidence of what we've been doing here. Leaving them behind isn't an option. It takes me ages to force the suitcase shut and move the zip tooth by tooth. Then I realize that I'm still in my pajamas, and I can't face the prospect of undoing it again. I slide my beach shoes onto my feet, put my laptop bag over my shoulder, and open the door into the hallway.

It's so silent in the house that every footstep seems to echo like a gunshot.

Someone's going to wake up.

I know they are.

Whoever it is will stick their head around their door and scare the life out of me. They'll immediately question why I'm carrying my suitcase, still dressed for sleep, and I'll burst into tears. It'll be a disaster.

Except, no one stirs. I'm halfway down the stairs before I allow myself to breathe and by the front door, before the first tear rolls down my cheek. My hand is on the doorknob when someone clears their throat in the darkness.

"Where are you going, Allie?" a deep voice asks.

The shock makes my heart squeeze out one huge beat, and I spin to find Russell sitting in the corner of the sectional, nursing a drink, dressed only in his underwear.

"I can't," I say, and storm through the door, rushing to get to my car. I throw open the passenger door and toss my suitcase inside. I struggle out of my work bag, dropping it into the footwell. By the time I've closed the door, Russell is next to me and I'm sobbing.

“Hey.” He grabs me into his arms, tugging me against his muscular chest that feels and smells like safety, but I struggle out. I can’t be drawn back into this situation again. There could be cameras on me right now and I don’t need any additional evidence to build an even more sordid story than the one that has already been written.

“I can’t,” I say again, running around to open the driver’s door. If I can just get inside and off this driveway...

“Allie,” Russell yells. “Allie. Don’t go like this.”

I slam the door and start the car, throwing it into drive as quickly as I can. I don’t wait to put on my belt, I just press my foot on the gas, and when I’m at the edge of the property, about to turn onto the road, I glance in my rearview mirror and find Russell watching me go, his hand gripping the top of his head in frustration.

It takes me an hour and a half to get back to my apartment and I sob most of the way. I use all the tissues I have, and my eyes are swollen and stinging.

I’ve only been away a few days, but already the door to my home seems unfamiliar. When I manage to fumble the key into the lock and turn it, the hallway feels like the home of a stranger. I imagined running to my place of sanctuary, but instead, this place is just a reminder of my life before I met the ten men I just left behind. This is a place where I was treading water rather than living.

I dump my luggage in the doorway to my bedroom, and head to the kitchen for some water. It chills me from the



inside when it hits my stomach, and I sob again, feeling as hollow as an echo chamber.

My phone vibrates, but I don't pick it up.

I don't care who it is because no one can help me with my problems.

They're insurmountable.

I'm going to fracture into pieces beneath the weight of them and there is no one who can hold me together.



## RUSSELL

It doesn't matter that it's the middle of the night and the rest of the men in the house are sleeping. As Allie speeds out of the driveway, I bound up the stairs, thudding my fist against every door.

I'm greeted with disgruntled shouts, and then a few heads appear around doorways.

"What the fuck, Russell?"

"What's wrong with you dude?"

"Seriously, man. It's the middle of the fucking night."

"Allie's gone," I say in response to the cacophony of grumbling, and that gets everyone's immediate attention. Angry faces turn serious in the space of one heartbeat. The men leave their rooms and gather around me in the hallway.

"What do you mean she's gone?"

"Where?"

"Why?"

I hold my hands out to stop the questions. "I don't know. She was crying. She didn't want me to comfort her. She wouldn't listen. She just sped out of here like a bat out of hell. Something has happened. We need to..."

"Fuck," Oliver shouts, interrupting my flow. He's staring down at his phone with eyes as wide as a lemur.

“What?” Stefan steps closer to his friend, looking over his shoulder at the screen. “Jesus. Is that?”

“How?” Whatever it is, it must be bad. Oliver’s lost all the color in his face and his hand is trembling. He swipes and swipes, his expression growing grimmer and grimmer. Stefan shakes his head. “It’s deliberate,” he tells his friend. “Someone’s out to sabotage you.”

“Forget me,” Oliver says. “I don’t give a shit about me. It’s Allie I care about. She must have seen this.”

“SEEN WHAT?” I yell, losing patience. “CAN SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?”

Oliver holds up his phone and we all squint at the image. It’s a blur of figures around a central blurred figure. When Carson, who’s closest, swears and grabs the phone for a closer look, I know what it is. An image of last night by the pool when Allie took us all, one after another. The night we showed Allie what a goddess she is.

Who could have done something like this and why?

We’re all just ordinary guys, aren’t we? I don’t have anyone who has such a grudge against me that they’d go to these lengths to fulfill. I can’t imagine the others do either, except Stefan immediately believed that Oliver’s the target, and I want to find out why right now.

“Oliver, you need to start talking.” I crowd closer, using my extra height and bulk to add physical presence to my demand. “If you know something, you need to share it with us. Allie’s hurting.”

Stefan and Oliver exchange a loaded glance. Oliver's not the only one who knows something. Stefan's in on this secret too.

"This is aimed at me," Oliver says. He runs his hands over his face as his phone is passed around the group. He seems to have aged ten years in five minutes. "I just inherited from my uncle who recently passed. He detested his own children and left everything to me."

"Your cousins have done this?"

He inhales, expanding his chest and letting his breath out in a rush. Without his neat appearance and impeccable clothes, he seems so diminished. "I don't know for sure, but if I had to bet, I'd say it was a ninety-nine percent chance it's them. They know if there's a way of having me discredited, I'll lose control of the businesses."

"What businesses?" Jimmy asks, stealing the question from the tip of my tongue.

"My uncle was in publishing."

Something about this response seems deliberately evasive. Publishing is a broad field. "What did he publish?" I ask.

"Newspapers and magazines."

"Which ones?" I ask, like a dog with a bone. Oliver might not want us to know the full facts, but he's damned well going to be transparent, or I'm going to shake the information out of him. He lists three major newspapers and three magazines. The name of the last magazine makes all our heads turn.

"You own the magazine that Allie works for?" Tom's jaw ticks as he clenches it, already knowing the answer.

Oliver glances into an unoccupied corner of the hallway, his shoulders rounded and hands hanging limply at his side. His hair is disheveled from sleep and it's the only time he's presented himself to the group as less than perfectly groomed. His revelation has far-reaching consequences, but at least he has the decency to look contrite. Oliver nods in answer to the question, like using the word yes is too much for him.

Guilt rolls off him in waves.

"You're Allie's boss?" Jonas asks.

"Not her boss." Oliver's voice returns, but his defense is stupid.

"Her boss's boss, then?" Jonas isn't going to let Oliver worm even an inch out of accepting this situation for what it is.

"Why are you here, if you're her boss's boss?"

He holds his hands out, palms to the group like a man about to face a firing squad. "I know it looks bad. It looks like I came here to take advantage of Allie, but that isn't the case. One of the notes my uncle left for me regarding Fine Line was that Kirsty wasn't moving the magazine forward in the way he'd hoped. His opinion was that women's magazines don't have the level of socially relevant content that they should. He advised me to try to find a replacement who could improve this. I looked into the staff roster and Allie seemed like the best candidate. I forced my way into this house under the guise that I wanted to see one of our journalists in action."

“And then you fucked her?” Gabe isn’t taking any prisoners. The betrayal in his voice on Allie’s behalf is palpable.

“That wasn’t my idea.” Oliver shakes his head, denial taking over. “I warned everyone at the start. I tried to steer the group away from that. I tried to leave but I could see she felt rejected because of it. And I couldn’t take it any further without revealing my identity. It would have ruined the whole assignment.”

“So, you put work first and Allie’s welfare second?” Theron says. There’s guilt in his tone too, the impact of his proposal smacking us all in the face.

“I put the work first for the magazine and for Allie.”

A few of the men shake their heads as though they don’t believe what they’re hearing.

“All I want is what’s best for Allie. I never wanted to hurt her.”

“But you have.” Tom leans against the wall, his face a mask of concern for the girl who has become the center of our world these past few days.

“You can’t possibly promote her now, can you? It will look like the worst kind of nepotism.” Stefan might be Oliver’s friend, but he’s articulating perfectly what we’re all thinking. The impact of Oliver’s actions isn’t just that Allie’s been exposed and humiliated, it’s damaged her professional reputation too.

“I wanted her. I craved her. I couldn’t refuse what she obviously wanted. I was weak and selfish. Now this is out, I don’t know what to do.” He shakes his head hopelessly.

“The terrible truth is that powerful men make it through sex scandals, but the women they’re involved with don’t.” It’s a reminder to him that the power dynamic between them was so heavily weighted in his favor.

“This is all my fault,” he says. “I should never...but I just couldn’t resist her. Not when she looked at me with those soft, pretty eyes...”

We all understand that part to our very bones. Allie’s sweetness is like a balm. Allie’s smile lights up a whole room. Allie’s spark and intelligence take her appeal to a whole other level. She’s perfection, and not just to me, but to all the men here.

“There’s no point in going over the whys now,” Carson says bluntly. “Now we need to come up with a plan to help our girl. She’s out there by herself with the world coming down on her. I don’t even want to think about what she’s going through with none of us there to protect her and support her.”

“We don’t even know where she lives,” Jimmy says, rubbing his hand over his weary face.

“I do. It’s in her personnel file.”

Carson shakes his head at Oliver’s admission. “That’s creepy as fuck, dude. But also a relief. I say we all get dressed and pack up our stuff. This thing here is over. And then we head out to Allie’s.”

“You think we should all just turn up on her doorstep like a mob?” Clay asks. He has a point. As much as I’d love us to handle this like the strong group we are, if Allie’s hurting, facing us all could make everything worse for her.



“I need to explain,” Oliver says. “I need her to understand. And then I need to make plans with her on how to approach the media coverage.”

“You’re forgetting we’re all in those photos.” Jimmy holds up the phone. “Carson, Clay, Jonas and Theron are also clearly visible if you zoom in.”

“I don’t give a fuck about that,” Theron says. “My boys will all slap me on the back for having some hot sex. The sex double standard is alive and well.”

“Yeah, I’m not bothered either.” Carson shrugs. “Tattooists are expected to be beasts in the sack.”

Clay nods in agreement with his friend.

“It’ll probably do my personal training business good,” Jonas says. “I mean, I look *good* in those photos.”

It’s a moment of lightness in a situation which seems hopeless and everyone laughs tightly, like we needed the break in the intensity of our response.

All the feelings that I’ve built up for Allie since arriving in this house are curled up inside me in a tight ball. It’s not something I wanted to feel. I’m not ready for a relationship, but Allie’s made me want to be.

None of us have gone as far as to admit we want more, but I suspect I’m not alone. I’ve seen the longing looks cast in her direction. I’ve seen the smiles, the gentle touches and the thoughtful gestures. There’s more than one man in this house who is harboring the start of deep feelings for Allie.

And if that’s the case, how would it even work?

I guess she'd have to pick between us. We could discuss it and come up with an approach. Maybe she has a favorite. But even as I think about it, the idea that she's secretly crushing on just one of us seems ridiculous. If that were the case, she wouldn't have been able to be with us all.

"We need to think about how to approach this before charging off to Allie's apartment like bulls in a china shop." I say it firmly to reduce the chance of a disagreement. My assertion is met with nods which is a relief.

"I think it will overwhelm her if we all go," Tom says. "We have to remember that she's just one person and we're ten. That's a lot of men to handle."

"Allie knows how to handle us," Gabe says. "I never would have believed it, but it's true."

"That was when things were good. Now things are bad, the whole dynamic has shifted."

More nods of agreement.

"I have to go," Oliver says. "This is my mess. I have to clean it up."

"I want to go too. I have some experience dealing with scandals. Not personal, but another friend." Stefan rests his hand on Oliver's shoulder, showing his solidarity.

"I want to go," I say. My confidence in the group has been shaken by Oliver's admission.

"I need to go." Theron stands with his hands in the pockets of his gray sleep shorts, and I understand immediately why he feels that way. As the orchestrator of the proposal, he created the right environment for this tornado of destruction.

We never should have agreed to the proposal. I said it from the start. But if we didn't, we never would have had the chance to experience the woman who has turned all of our lives inside out and upside down. I should resent him for bringing trouble to Allie's doorstep, but how can I when his impetuous actions have brought me so much joy? Joy that I didn't realize I missed so much.

"Four is plenty," I bark, before anyone else has a chance to toss their hat into the ring.

"We'll leave in twenty minutes." Oliver glances around the hallway. "I need to check the place over and lock it up."

We all stare at him, wondering what he means exactly. Then the penny drops. "This is your beach house." I stare at him, dumbfounded.

Oliver nods. "Another thing my uncle left me in his will."

"I need to upgrade my uncles." Jimmy's already drifting back to his room when he laughs wryly at his own joke.

I wonder how Allie will react when she finds out just how much Oliver was involved in setting up the assignment that's crumbled her present and risked her future. If it was me, I think I'd punch him in the face.

But I believe Oliver's regret and apology. The confident man has disappeared and in his place is one who's cloaked in a dark shadow of shame and regret.

"Twenty minutes," I agree, even though nobody is waiting for my confirmation. Twenty minutes until we start on a journey to find our girl and make things right.

Who knows if she'll listen.

All I know is that I've never been more desperate for someone's forgiveness than I am right now.



# OLIVER

I've fucked up a lot in my life, not because of errors of judgement but more because I'm not afraid to take risks, and with risk comes unpredictability.

But this fuck-up is the worst of them all.

The thought that Allie is alone and upset has torn my heart through my rib cage and left it flayed and open by my feet. The thought that I've brought her anything but joy and pleasure is a knife to the gut.

I can't pack quickly enough, so instead of my usual impeccably orderly suitcase, I just stuff everything inside in a crumpled mess. Suddenly, nothing that seemed important before, seems important now.

My mind whirs like the engine of a jet ski, noisy and out of control, revving over all the things I need to tell Allie, and all the ways I might help her in this disaster I've created. Forget that it was Theron who came up with the proposal that instigated this catastrophe. It was my decisions from before we even arrived at the beach house that led to all of this.

My original motivations behind the idea don't matter now. They're dust in the wind. All that matters is reaching Allie and bringing her peace and relief.

But how am I going to do it?

I've been backed into a corner of my own making by members of my family, out for blood. It's not an excuse. Far

from it. But I should have been more careful. I should have listened to my reservations and not let my dick rule my head.

*It wasn't just your dick, though, was it?*

My dick didn't crave the beguiling mix of innocence and intelligence that makes Allie so bewitching. It didn't love seeing her light up like the moon at its fullest. It wasn't my dick that listened to her talk about what's important to her in life to find so much to admire in her answer. No, that was all in my heart and mind.

*What have I done?*

Stefan calls it a midlife crisis. I don't think it's that. Allie snuck up on me in a way that no other woman ever has before, and she stole my sense and my propriety and left me an impetuous mess capable of wrecking everything.

I'm not blaming her. Far from it. The guilt rests entirely in my court. I'm old enough to have sufficient experience to understand and deal with my weaknesses. How many opportunities did I have to simply walk away? I tried to give her a way out, but she didn't want one. I could have excused myself once I saw the direction of the group, but I couldn't. Hell would freeze over before I have the strength to walk away from Allie.

By the time I've finished packing, the rumble of voices is already traveling up the stairs. I drag my suitcase down, finding Tom, Theron, Gabe, Stefan and Russell by the door. Stefan's eyebrows draw together when he sees me, and he steps away from the others to rest his hand on my shoulder. "You look like shit. Are you sure you're okay to drive?"

At any other time, I would take a question like that personally, but today, I feel unsettled enough to acknowledge that his lack of confidence in me is probably on point. My hands don't feel right. My mind is taken up with whirring through scenario after scenario that could help to rectify the situation for Allie. I'm too focused on fixing things that I don't think I'll be able to concentrate enough to get myself to her apartment safely.

"Maybe you should drive."

Stefan meets my suggestion with a surprised nod. And with that, I change my mind about something else.

"Gabe, I need you and the others to stay here. I don't think everyone should leave yet. It isn't time."

"What do you mean?" Theron asks.

"I just...I haven't worked it out yet, but I want Allie to know that coming back here and being with us all again is an option."

Gabe slicks his tongue over his teeth and his eyes darken. "I don't think that's something she's ever going to want again."

"Enjoy the place," I tell him, not able to face his defeatism. "Order in if you need to. Whatever you want." I slide my credit card from my wallet and hand it to him. "I'm not asking for me. I'm asking for Allie."

Gabe studies the card in his hand like it's an unexploded bomb and, after a beat, hands it back. "I'll stay but I don't need your money." He glances at his cousin and they share an unspoken communication. "But I can't promise the rest will."



I guess that's as good as I can hope for. Turning to Russell and Theron, I slide my wallet back into my pocket. "Stefan is driving. I think we should all travel together."

"I'll drive me and Theron," Russell says. "I don't like being driven, and it gives us options."

His jaw is set, determinedly. I guess I'll have to accept that maybe he isn't interested in presenting a united front to Allie, and maybe it's unfair of me to expect that he would be. Maybe Russell has his own plan for when we arrive, and that may not involve the rest of us. He's always been a lone wolf in the group, although by the end, I thought Allie had brought him into the fold.

What am I saying? We're not really a group, are we? Just men brought together to discuss our physical attributes. And yet, for the first time since I was in college, I feel part of something bigger and better. I didn't realize how much I missed the camaraderie of men until I spent time in this house. I'd forgotten how good it is to live with other people.

Gabe backs away from the door, and the four of us who are leaving wheel our suitcases down to the waiting cars.

Tom follows, hanging around next to Russell's truck as he tosses the luggage in the back. Before Russell can open his door, Tom steps forward. "Bring her back, Russell. Okay. Just bring her back."

Russell freezes momentarily, his face taking on an openness I haven't seen before. Then Tom claps him on the shoulder and the strange spell is broken.

As Tom strides back to the house, I open the passenger door to Stefan's car and slide into its luxurious depths.

Sensing my disquiet, Stefan sets up a playlist after tapping in Allie's address, and we set off on our mission, which is feeling more and more like a mission impossible.

We're half an hour into the journey when Stefan reduces the music to a quieter volume.

"I really like Allie," he admits. His tone rises at the end, as though he's surprised at his own feelings, which I understand totally.

"I really like her too."

"It's been a long time since I really liked anyone."

The impact of that statement settles between us. He knows it's the same for me. We've been friends for more than fifteen years and witnessed each other's relationship failures.

"What am I supposed to do, Stefan?" I ask. "It doesn't matter how much I try to come up with a strategy to fix this, I just can't."

"What are you trying to fix?"

"Allie's life."

He nods, and taps his fingers on the steering wheel, out of time to the music but maybe in time to his own thoughts.

"What about your life?"

"I don't give a shit what they write about me. I don't give a shit what anyone thinks of me. The only thing I care about is Allie and making sure she's okay...not just now, but in the future too."

Stefan continues drumming against the steering wheel. In the darkness, his profile is set with concentration as he stares at the road that stretches darkly before us. Stefan glances behind at the truck that's following. Theron and Russell must be talking about this situation too, although I'm sure their comments are less measured than my friend's.

"We need to fix this," he says eventually. "I don't know how we're going to do it, but I'm with you all the way, okay?"

And even though we're no closer to working out what to do next and how to help Allie, knowing Stefan's going to have my back takes me one step closer to believing we might have a chance to make it right.

"It's going to sound ridiculous," my friend adds. "But I didn't want this week to end."

It should sound ridiculous. Two fully grown men on the wrong side of forty, confessing to relishing a life that was more frat house than beach house.

"I'm an only child." He clears his throat and I know he's thinking about his parents, who both died in the past five years. "I thought I was used to living alone, but it turns out I like company more than I thought."

"Me too," I agree.

"And I like Allie." He folds his lips between his teeth and shakes his head. "It's more than that. I have feelings for Allie that I don't want to walk away from."

I don't tell him that I do too because it feels too futile to even go there.

Instead, I stare out of the window and remember the past few days when all of the stresses of my life were reduced to nothing by one sweet girl and nine men who've become my unlikely friends.



## ALLIE

“I’m coming home,” Dawn says.

No hello. No questions about how I’ve gotten myself into this mess. My friend is ride or die. She’d fly for a day and spend a fortune on a plane ticket to be my emotional support. Those three words make me cry all over again.

“Don’t be ridiculous.” I blow my nose and take a sip of water.

“You sound like shit.”

I know Dawn’s right. My voice is ragged, as though I’ve spent a whole evening yelling over loud music at a club with laryngitis, and my nose is swollen from the effect of all the sobbing.

I don’t ask how Dawn knows about the drama that’s currently swallowing my life like a giant whale. Maybe someone sent her the images, or maybe she found them by herself. Neither is good.

“Well, you know there are no judgments from me,” she says. “Not that it matters that much, I guess. If those men were treating you good, then more power to you.”

“My life is over.” I repeat the mantra that’s been running inside my head on a loop, but rather than commiserating with me, Dawn scoffs with disgust.

“Your life isn’t over, Allie. So, you had some sex. So, it looked phenomenal. So the fuck what!”

“My name is going to be linked to this forever.”

“See, this is why I hate the double standard so much. I guarantee not one of those men is thinking about their names being ruined because of what they did. They’re probably getting phone calls from their buddies, asking for all the juicy details.”

“Probably,” I agree miserably.

“Is it too soon to ask for the juicy details?” There’s a smile in Dawn’s voice that softens my distress just a little.

“You don’t need to ask,” I say. “You get to live it every day.”

“That good, huh?”

“Yes. It really was that good. But not good enough to ruin my life over.”

In the background, I hear the murmur of men’s voices, which I guess is understandable when she lives with nine. Does my friend ever get a moment to herself? Probably not, and maybe that’s the way she likes it. As I stare around at the emptiness of my tiny apartment for one, I long for the companionship I shared over the past few days. The single life isn’t for me. I guess that realization is the only positive to come out of this catastrophe. That and the knowledge that good sex isn’t something I’ll only get to read about or watch in movies.

“My men are making an excellent point behind me,” she says proudly.

“All excellent points will be gratefully received,” I say, trying to be appreciative but still filled with a boulder-sized level of doom inside.

“You’re a journalist. Your whole objective is to change people’s opinions.”

“Well, it’s more about reporting the truth,” I say.

“Well, yes. But the opinion thing is important too. You’ve been writing that stuff for so long. Isn’t it time that you took the bull by the horns and wrote something that could be truly opinion changing?”

“I can write anything,” I say, not meaning for the claim to sound as cocky as it does. “But that doesn’t mean they’ll publish it.”

“If it’s good, they will. This scandal is going to get your magazine an epic level of exposure. If they decide not to maximize it, they shouldn’t be in business.”

“So you’re saying I should write about my experiences?”

“Be truthful about what happened. Challenge the stereotypes. Stand proud behind your decisions. Nothing good happens when we run away at the first signs of difficulty. Believe me, I know. When you run headlong into it, you show backbone, and human beings are programmed to respect people who stand tall in the face of challenges, no matter how terrible the odds. Think about the three hundred Spartans. They’re still being talked about and having films made about them all these years later. You think if they just ran away from their enemy, anyone would know about them? Be like the three hundred Spartans. Be a beacon for courage when it comes to women’s sexuality.”

“I don’t think the three hundred Spartans had a view on women’s sexuality,” I snort. “And that doesn’t sound like me



at all. It sounds like you, Dawn. Are you sure you don't want to change places with me?"

She chuckles darkly. "I'm quite content being my own beacon of sexual courage over here. You know, the people in Byron were funny about our relationship at first, but now, they don't blink an eyelid. And you know me. I'm not shy about PDA. My boys get love and affection from me wherever we are and whenever we feel like it."

"And you seriously don't get any hate about it."

"Put it this way. If we did get hate, I wouldn't give a fuck. And my boys...well, they'd have something to say about it with their big manly fists."

"You're damn right, baby," someone yells in the background.

Dawn giggles. "You see what I mean."

"You have a good backup, that's for sure." Even making that statement hurts my heart. I glance around at my small sitting room, at the photos of friends and family on the side unit and my plant, which needs watering. There are signs of life here, but no men jumping in to protect my name or my person. I'm alone in this situation. Back to square one.

"I don't know if I can do it," I tell Dawn in the smallest voice I've ever spoken in. "I don't know if I can stand up and face all of this on my own."

"You're never on your own, sweetie. Remember that. And you can. You're a brilliant writer. The only one who has ever made me cry. Turn that gift of yours for eliciting emotion in your audience to your article. Make the world understand

what it's like to be a woman amongst so many men. Make them understand you and envy you. Make them sick to their stomachs that they haven't gotten to live your slice of heaven, and then make them cry at how terrible the world is at accepting anything that's different."

Wow. Dawn's the one who needs to turn her attention to persuasive writing, not me.

"I'll try," I whisper.

"And when you need someone to read it, send it my way."

Bless my friend and her support. For the first time since Grace called me, I feel a glimmer of hope within the doom. "Can you do me a favor?"

"Anything."

"Write me an email about what it's been like for you to love so many men. My experience has been shallow compared to yours. I need the full perspective."

"You've got it," she says. "But are you sure it's been shallow?"

Am I? I think back to all the warm hugs and gentle kisses the ten men at the beach house gave me. All the words of encouragement. All the humor and fun we shared. It didn't feel shallow at all. If it had been, I never would have felt the courage to go so far.

And that realization just makes everything worse.

I'm about to say bye to my long-distance friend while the tears are at bay and the conviction she's given me is still fresh, when the doorbell rings.

“Who’s ringing your bell so late?” Dawn asks.

“I don’t know,” I say, but I guess I better go check.



# ALLIE

When I look through the peephole in my door, I don't know who I was expecting to be out there. A neighbor pissed at me for having a too loud telephone conversation in the depths of the night. A delivery driver working strange hours. A murderer. I'm so overwhelmed and exhausted that my mind isn't exactly making sense right now.

What I see is a group of men with long, serious faces.

What the fuck are they doing here? How did they find me?

I take a step back, shock hitting me in the gut so hard I press my hand over my lower belly and push.

"Allie," a low voice says through the door. "Open up, honey. We want to help."

Help?

How the hell do they think they can help me?

"Allie," another voice calls. If they keep making this much noise, my neighbors really are going to complain. I don't want to open the door to them. I don't want them to see me in this blotchy, low, desperate state, but I can't just leave them outside.

I unlatch the door slowly, praying that they'll listen to me when I tell them to go.

"You can't come in," I hiss through the crack. "You have to go. You're going to disturb my neighbors."

It's Russell who is nearest the door and his piercing green eyes loom closer, fixing mine with so much empathy and kindness that tears bubble to my eyes and burn at my throat.

"Allie. Just let us in for a second. Please. You're not alone in this. We're here to help."

At that moment, Oliver steps into view and I'm so shocked that he's come that I take a step back, losing a grip on the door. Russell swings it open gently, making full use of the opportunity, as my hand flies to my mouth.

God, the betrayal that slides through my insides is inky-black and swamp-like. "Allie." Russell's voice has a gravelly edge that's new, as though the sight of my distress has his throat closing too.

"Allie, I'm so sorry," Oliver starts, and like it has its own mind, my hand snaps out, palm facing him as firmly as a crossing guard trying to stop a juggernaut. I don't want to hear his excuses. I don't want to hear his reasons for putting me in this hellish situation where I've lost everything overnight. All the trust we built up is gone and hearing him speak makes me despair.

"Please," I say. "I just...I can't."

He shrinks back, chastened. At least he's listening because if he tried to push his way in and force me to listen to his explanation, I don't think I'd ever be able to forgive him.

"Allie." Stefan steps around Oliver. "If you won't speak to Oliver, that's okay. But please let at least one of us stay with you...and help you."

Theron, the other man who dared to search me out in the middle of the night, steps forward, but I'm angry at him, too. It was his idea that started all of this. He was the one who waved the temptation in front of me like a friggin' drug pusher, and I was the weak individual who had a taste of the purple rubber imitation cock and got addicted to the idea of more.

It can't be Oliver. It won't be Theron, and Stefan is too close to Oliver for me to want him, either. Only Russell feels like safety to me now.

"Russell," I say, gripping the door, ready to push it closed.

"Okay." Stefan nods once, his expression grave and eyes searching. None of the men in the hallway look as though they're okay with what's happening, but that doesn't matter. We're not in this together. I'm in this alone. They can all walk away without looking back. What happened that night by the pool is a line across my life. For the rest of my days, there will be the time before that night, and the time after.

All of a sudden, all the paths that were in front of me as recently as a week ago seem cut off. All the paths I didn't plan to take but knew in the back of my mind were available if I wanted them are no longer there.

The loss of opportunity is like a sucker punch to the gut and the old adage, 'you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone' plays in my mind. How was I happy restricting myself to this job, writing articles that were fine but didn't engage my mind or my heart? How was I possibly planning to stay in this job that felt like treading water in a choppy sea for the foreseeable future when there was so much else out there?

I take a step back, and Russell murmurs something through the door and then closes it.

He looms so large in my tiny entrance way that I want to laugh. A giant at my door. Aren't the giants in fairy tales always the bad guys?

He reaches for me, his big, calloused hand touching my elbow with such gentleness, it almost breaks me. Tears stream down my face, and his expression grows tender, as though the sight of me breaking is hurting his heart, too.

With no words, he gathers me into his embrace, smoothing my damp hair from my face and stroking over my back. I bury my face into his warm shirt, my hands grasping the fabric so he can't let me go, even if he wants to. With his strong arms around me, the darkness of the world, and all the blank faces of those who've seen my most private experience and judged me, drift away. My frantic breathing calms, as Russell, with his stoic and silent presence, soothes my raging anxiety just by being there.

He's a wall against the world.

A barrier holding everything bad away.

"It's okay," he rumbles eventually. "It's going to be okay."

And even though what he says is impossible, a part of me dares to hope it could be true.





## STEFAN

The tension in the car on the drive back to the beach house is palpable. Theron looms in the back, choosing to sit in the middle seat like a giant block of granite in my rearview mirror. His jaw is set like concrete, his eyes narrowed like lasers. Every so often, I catch him looking at Oliver as though he wants to tear my friend's brain out through his nostrils.

I'm primed to step in if he starts to rail on Oliver. While he should have been open about his involvement with Allie's company, the rest of us were all there and participated in the risky activity that got press attention. Theron, of all of us, engineered the situation. He's the puppet master in all this, and he needs to acknowledge that before he says anything to anyone else.

We don't talk much.

Anything I have to say to Oliver to assist with him finding a route out of this tangled mess will have to be done back at the beach house, where we can talk in private.

But when we're thirty minutes from there, Theron surprises me.

"It's my fault," he mumbles. "Allie was a good girl and I..." He stops as though what he was planning to say next hurts to force through his lips. He clears his throat. "I wanted her, but I knew that trying to seduce her with all you guys around wouldn't work, so I came up with that stupid fucking proposal. I was selfish and stupid. I was a dick-driven asshole."

I glance at Oliver, who still seems folded in on himself. Neither of us expected any kind of responsibility from a man like Theron. “We were all there,” I say. “Allie didn’t do anything she didn’t want to. You were just the catalyst.”

“If a kid eats too much ice-cream and gets sick, who’s to blame, the kid or the parent who supplied the ice-cream?”

Oliver turns in his seat. “Allie is a grown woman. You’re not her parent, and you were upfront about what you wanted and what you were offering. This is all on me.”

“Fuck.” Theron, who had leaned forward with his confession, now slumps back against the seat back. “She looks so broken...and I just...I can’t fucking take that she wouldn’t let us in.”

“I know.” We all understand Theron’s frustration. “We have to trust Russell to be her rock.”

Oliver nods in agreement. “Russell can be that for her.”

“The man couldn’t be more rocklike if he tried,” Theron says.

We all laugh to let out a little of the pent up agitation.

“That’s what’s great about there being so many of us.” I leave the sentiment hanging for a moment. “For Allie, I mean. Between us, we have everything she needs.”

“How many men does it take to make the perfect boyfriend?” Theron says it dryly but there is something in his statement that I can’t ignore.

“You know Allie has a friend with nine boyfriends. And that woman, Natalie, from next door, has three husbands. You ever

thought about that kind of arrangement?”

“You mean for more than just hot, kinky sexy?”

“Yeah.” I meet Theron’s eyes in the mirror, trying to gauge his reaction. It isn’t outright rejection. If anything, there’s a spark of interest there.

“I always thought I was a traditional guy,” he says, rubbing his stubbly chin. “My parents have talked about the day I’m gonna get married to a nice Greek girl since I was just out of the womb. It’s like a mantra they hope they can embed so that my future is mapped out for me.”

“And now?”

“Now, I don’t know. I’ve gone this many years without finding someone like Allie. And I don’t think I realized how good it would be to have male company...you know, other dudes around to discuss things with.”

“Yeah. The guy-company has been surprising,” I say.

Oliver doesn’t jump into the conversation, but I can tell he’s listening intently. I take it as a positive sign that he’s not displaying any disagreement.

“Ten men who’ve been thrown together shouldn’t get along as well as we do.” Theron glances out of the window at the sun that is starting to blink brightly at the horizon. A new day is coming, but what it will bring is unknown.

“What happens next will have a huge impact on Allie’s life. If we all disappear and leave her to deal with the fallout of those pictures, it will make things worse.”

“So, what are you saying?” Oliver finally jumps in, his voice almost desperate.

“I’m saying we need to step up. We need to be the men she needs us to be.”

“As a group?”

I nod and glance at my friend, finding his expression less pained. “As a group. If Allie’s friend can have nine men, why can’t Allie have ten?”

“There was a reality TV show about one woman with ten men a few years back,” Theron reminds us.

“I remember that. Did they work out?”

“The show was a hit,” Theron continues. “People loved the dynamic. They were a cute family. I remember that much.”

“People love a happy ever after,” I muse, already thinking about how to sell the story of the start of a crazy relationship setup that none of us expected.

“We need to talk to the rest,” Oliver says.

“And somehow get grumpy Russell on board,” Theron adds, but it’s with a smile.

“Exactly.”

“There’s just one other big part of this puzzle,” Oliver says.

“And what’s that?” Theron leans forward, gripping the headrests so he’s more part of the conversation.

“Allie might hate the idea.”

I reach out for my bottle of water, taking a long swig while I contemplate what to say next. This discussion feels big, and

the outcome even bigger. In the end, I decide that discussing that possibility isn't beneficial to anyone. "Maybe," I accept, "but no idea ever comes to fruition without some challenges on the way."

Oliver rubs his hands over his face. "There's no way she'll be able to think about anything like this with all the press attention looming over her. And the job situation."

"So, you deal with that, and let us deal with the rest," Theron says.

He makes it sound so simple, and I know it's not going to be.

All we can do is try.

So that's what we plan to do.



## ALLIE

Russell is asleep in my bed as I brush my teeth, staring out of the window at the rising sun. The night had been turbulent, marked by tears and shared misery. He held me until I stopped crying and we both fell asleep. But I couldn't rest for long. My racing heart woke me with the memories of the scandalous photos that are now splattered across the internet. Despite my exhaustion and frazzled nerves, I needed to get up.

Drowning in panic and misery isn't going to get me anywhere.

There's an article to write.

Regardless of everything, I'm going to deliver what I've been paid for.

And with Dawn's idea fresh in my mind, I need to begin to get the words down while they're ready to flow.

I set up my computer and immediately archive the draft I wrote after Kirsty's visit. It sounds hollow after all my experiences. Rather than providing readers with insight, it's cliché and ridiculous. I can do so much better.

Whether my draft, with all its truth and grit will be printed or not is another matter.

I have a feeling that Kirsty will reject it outright. She has a tone and style that she expects to run consistently through every piece that's featured in the magazine, regardless of who



penned it. In reality, every journalist in the place has a natural sound to their writing that is sanitized by the magazine until everything is unified and bland.

I begin to type from the heart. I delve into the stories of the men I spent time with at the beach house, highlighting their similarities and differences. Each man has left an indelible mark on me, and I strive to convey their impact on my emotions. Theron empowered me to explore my desires. He gave me the freedom to put aside all my anxieties about sex and open my body to new experiences. Stefan, my first, was a firm and steady hand, who made the time we spent together a safe and exciting space. Carson woke different desires in me, and he and Jimmy showed me what it could be like to be worshiped by more than one man. Tom, Clay and Gabe gave me so much pleasure that my mind disconnected from my body, and then helped me realize it's okay to want more. Jonas and Theron took me further on my journey with lessons that made me more confident, and Oliver and Russell sealed us as one formidable group.

So, what does size mean to the men in this story? It's led to experiences both positive and negative. It's led them to feeling both objectified and powerful.

And what does size mean to me? Yes, the men I've come to know and care about all have ten inches, but would it matter to me if they didn't?

Of course not. Do I think it has an impact on their ability to please me? Maybe a little. I guess I'm lucky I don't have some of the issues with their size that their previous lovers had. But

the most important thing is that they're all wonderful and considerate lovers.

They're decent men who made me feel like a queen.

As I continue to write, the words flow with an ease that I've lost in recent months. Instead of trying to force out the content for my article, I feel like my heart rests in the center of this one.

I'm concentrating so hard that I don't hear Russell approach me until his hands rest on my shoulders. "You're writing?"

"The article," I say.

"Our story?"

I twist my head to gaze up at him, moved by his words. "Our story."

"Can I read it when you're done?"

I nod, reaching out to cover his hand with mine, so grateful to have him standing with me through this process. "Of course. It's our story. I want you to be comfortable with everything I say about what happened between us."

"That's not why I want to read it," he says, squeezing my shoulders gently. "I know you'll write something that does justice to our experience. I just want to read something you wrote. I want to hear your *voice*."

It's the first time a man has understood that what I write is deeply connected to who I am. When it's from the heart, it reflects part of me that I hide from the world, the secret place where my true ideas about the world reside. The voice I use when I write unconstrained deeply reflects my thoughts and

feelings in a way that spoken words often don't get the chance to.

I blink back tears that threaten again, and he bends to kiss the top of my head. "Can I fix you a drink or something to eat?"

"I should be offering that to you," I say. "Some hostess I am."

"I don't need you to be a hostess." Russell's already lumbering across the room and into the kitchen, his big body taking up so much space in my apartment it makes me breathless. "I need you to write your truth, and when you're done, we need to go back to the beach house and deal with what comes next."

I open my mouth to say I can't. I can't face them all again, knowing what's been said about us and the pictures that are circulating. Each of their lives is going to be affected by that one night. It was special to me. A moment when I allowed myself to satisfy all of my cravings without guilt, but it was nothing new to them. I'm just another woman in a long line of women. If there wasn't photographic evidence, they probably wouldn't remember me in a few years' time.

"I'm not going anywhere," I say, catching Russell by surprise just as he passes through the doorway to the kitchen. He stops, and his broad back grows wider on a deep inhale.

"I know it's going to be hard," he says, not turning to face me. "I know you don't want to face what comes next because everything feels uncertain. But sometimes we have to steel ourselves for the difficult times because what is beyond the horizon is worth getting to."

“What’s beyond the horizon is me losing my job and going into hiding,” I say. “It’s my parents dying of mortification. It’s everything I’ve worked for crashing down around me.”

“Trust me,” he says, still not turning. “Trust me, and you’ll get through this.”

“Like you’ve gotten through your problems?” I know I’m poking a sore spot, but I don’t care. He’s expecting me to be stronger than he is. How’s that fair?

“Sometimes we’re better at helping others than we are at helping ourselves.”

That’s truer than it should be. Can I trust him? Can I believe that he will help me through this in some way I haven’t managed to think of despite all of my mental churning?

I can’t imagine what idea he has brewing that’s going to rewind time, but I do know that I’d trust Russell with my life.

“I tell you what. I’ll trust you on one condition.”

He turns then, his brows tight over his forest eyes. He doesn’t ask me what the condition is, but simply stands there, resigned to whatever demand I might have.

“If I let you help me, you have to let me help you, okay?”

He rubs his hand over his short, cropped hair that I know will feel like velvet under his palm and focuses on the ceiling for the longest time. I think he’s going to say no, and we’ll both be the worse for that decision. I cross my fingers, wanting his support more than I’ve ever allowed myself to rely on another person.

He turns and I hang my head, defeated.

“Okay.” His voice carries, even though that one reluctant word is said in a whisper.

“Okay.”

And for the first time since Grace called me, I let myself hope that there’s a way out of this for me and Russell that won’t break us both.



## GABE

All day, Oliver has been pacing the beach house on his phone; the beach house we now know belongs to him.

The rest of us have ignored our phones and the incoming calls and messages we've received since the pictures and story were published. Stefan's been a constant presence at Oliver's side, understanding more about what's going on than everyone else. The rest of the group spent the day trying to keep our tempers even. Jimmy, Jonas, and Tom went for a run. Carson, Clay, and Theron all used the gym. I spent over an hour swimming lengths in the pool, relishing the peace and quiet and the feel of the sun on my skin. We started off as an odd group of men who were mostly strangers to each other, but in this beach house, time seems to have slowed right down which has allowed real bonds and genuine friendships to be formed.

The house is beautiful, but without Allie, it feels empty of its soul. Without her smiling face and bubbling laughter, it's just a shell.

It was Allie who made this place fun.

It was Allie who was the anchor.

And I miss her.

I miss the way she brought us all together. I miss the easy companionship of the other men, before the stress of the photographer's intrusion set us all on edge.

Russell's been in touch with Stefan, so we know Allie's state of mind. He's standing in for all of us, encouraging her and supporting her. She's writing the article, and telling her side of the story. All day she's been receiving calls from other women who live in unconventional relationships with well-endowed men, lending their voices and support. Who knew that the reverse harem ladies club was even a thing?

This morning Natalie, Mason, Max, and Miller from next door dropped round to check on us. They were so kind to offer us support and advice. Natalie brought home-baked blueberry muffins and Mason gave us the number of his publicist who he thought might be able to help deal with the fall out from the photos. They shared the challenges they faced when embarking on their relationship and left us with some feelings of hope. We've left it to Oliver and Stefan to deal with the public strategy on our side. The muffins lasted five minutes after they left!

I'd rather it was me lending my direct support than Russell, but it is what it is. If he can convince Allie to return to the house, we will all get a chance to tell her what we want.

Later, Theron finds me on the beach, watching the waves lap over the sand, lost in my thoughts. He sits beside me, and we watch as grains are pulled away and more are swept in to replace them.

My grandma is as philosophical as the ancient Greeks. When I was a kid, I'd watch her roll flavored rice into vine leaves and she'd tell me what it was like growing up in a small Mediterranean village. It was years since she'd been home,



years spent in a place that was alien in its language and culture, but she didn't have any regrets. She'd always tell me that life goes past in the blink of an eye and to make the most of every day. Her favorite piece of wisdom was to seize life by the balls and not worry about what could go wrong. Regret is harder to live with than the things that go wrong when we try. And to love. She'd always finish on the love part, but it wasn't because it was an afterthought. It was the most important message, and she wanted to make sure I'd remember it the most.

Now, I feel like the ocean's going to pull me away from this shore. There are so many reasons to allow myself to be dragged away by the current. Allie's angry with us. We haven't known each other long. There are nine other men involved. My family will think I'm crazy.

But my heart feels something new.

Love.

I didn't understand what it would feel like to want a woman the way I want Allie. To want a woman so much that I'd let her leave me if I thought it would make her happier. To want to dive into a situation I can't control and punch my way out of it if it would make her life easier.

"My dad's been blowing up my phone," Theron says. His long legs are bent and he's resting his forearms against his knees. There are a lot of differences between us. He's taller and I'm stockier. He's leaner and I'm bulkier. He speaks first and thinks later whereas I spend time thinking things through. But there are a lot of similarities too. We both work like dogs

and enjoy giving it our all. We both love the company of other people. Most importantly, to both of us, family is everything.

“Did you answer?”

Theron shakes his head. “I’ve never not answered before.”

I lean back, resting my weight on my elbows, stretching my sandy legs out in front of me. Weirdly, I notice I have the same feet as my cousin. How does that shit work?

“They’re going to be mad,” I say.

“Mama will clip me around the back of the head and dad will slap me on the back and ask me if she was a good lay.” Theron chuckles darkly at the images he’s created and uses his hand to indicate fucking in a way only Greeks can interpret.

“Yeah, if you go home and promise to marry a nice Greek girl.”

He sighs, the smile dropping from his expression. “Yeah.”

A man jogs past on the shoreline, his bare feet tossing up sand and spray behind him, and we both watch as he disappears into the distance.

“They’re going to combust if we stay,” I say eventually.

“Is there even an *if*?”

I turn to face my cousin, remembering all the stupid shit we’ve gotten up to over the years and how much I love him. Family is everything, but we have a bond that’s stronger than brothers. “There’s no *if* for me. I want her.”

He nods once with an expression of defiance, as though he’s already imagining smashing down all the barriers we are

going to face. "They'll come round in the end," he says grimly.

"If we give them grandchildren." We laugh at the truth of it and the ridiculousness. Allie doesn't even want to step foot in the same house as us right now and we're discussing procreating with her.

Even though it's ridiculous, I can imagine the sweetness of our kids.

"Remember that show with that rich family...ten brothers and one woman...what was her name?"

"Laura...McGregor," he reminds me.

"Yeah. How many kids did she have?"

"They're up to five, I think. I don't know. My sister mentioned it over breakfast. She saw it on social media. You think she'll have ten?"

"You think Allie would have ten?" We both shrug, the idea settling between us. One child for each of the men inside.

"This could blow up in our faces," he says suddenly. "It could really blow up in our faces."

Theron's right. Love is always risky but with a love like this, the risk is magnified. "Remember cousin Mario? All that money they spent on his wedding. His fiancé was the dream girl. Everyone loved her. My mom called her a saint...an angel on earth."

"And then she went and fucked his brother."

"Exactly. Perfect woman. Perfect wedding. Expensive divorce. Broke the whole family apart."

“Allie’s perfect,” Theron says, his protective instincts coming to the fore.

“She is to us,” I say. “She will be to them...in time.”

“Are we crazy for wanting this?” Theron asks me, his forehead furrowed so deeply, his gray eyes are almost obliterated by his dark brows.

“I thought I was,” I admit. “I mean, I love you, but these other men...” I shrug, struggling for the words to express myself. “...they’ve become friends. This house has felt like a big family.”

“Yeah.”

“And we’re used to having a big family. I don’t think there’s been a single day in my life when there haven’t been troops of people traipsing through the house for coffee and gossip. There’s usually at least ten people in the kitchen.”

Theron chuckles and nudges me with his shoulder. “True, but it’s usually all the women making something delicious for us to eat.”

“Yeah, but some of these dudes can really cook,” I joke.

Behind us, the gate to the house slams on its hinges and we both turn. Tom’s there, and he jogs forward, a smile emblazoned across his face. “There you are. I’ve been looking all over for you.”

“For what?” Theron asks.

“She’s coming back,” Tom blurts, bending to rest his hands on his knees. “Russell did it. He got her to come back.”

Me and Theron scramble to our feet, dusting away the sand as though Allie's due to arrive any second. "How long?"

"Couple of hours," Tom says.

"Just long enough for a shower and to tidy the place up." Theron's already walking back to the house and Tom, and I follow.

Where there was a hanging sense of misery over us all, there's now hope.

Allie's coming back.

It doesn't mean she's okay with what happened. It doesn't mean she has feelings for us. It doesn't mean she'd ever want what we've discussed between us all. But it does mean we'll have a chance to pitch for what we want. Maybe we'll strike out. Maybe we'll hit a home run.

But whatever happens, there are going to be a lot of hurdles to jump to make it work.

For the first time in my life, I'm ready to face the hurdles head on.



## ALLIE

As we pull into the driveway of the beach house, my heart picks up in a race of anticipation and anxiety. All the way, Russell has been steering the subject of conversation away from what's going to happen when we walk through the door, not because he doesn't want to face up to it, but because he's worried I'll decide to turn around.

I can't resent him for delaying the fallout until he's just one of ten. I can't resent him mostly because he opened up about the challenges he's faced in his own life. They put everything into perspective. A few photos and the loss of a job doesn't come anywhere near the trauma of losing friends and carrying out orders that haunt you. It doesn't touch the kind of life and death circumstances he's trying to put behind him.

"It's going to be okay." Russell rests his hand on my knee, a heavy and solid reassurance.

"Let's just get this over with, okay?"

He nods and throws the car door open as I grab my purse and exit the vehicle. In the trunk, my suitcase and his rest side by side. I didn't want to bring mine, but he insisted. Too weakened and exhausted, I let him haul it from my apartment. But it will remain outside because I'm not staying for longer than it takes to hear Oliver out and have my chance to air my feelings.

Russell rings the bell, and Stefan is the one to open the front door. His green eyes find me, and worry fills their

depths. I wish I could wear sunglasses inside so I don't have to face these men with all my grief on show. No matter how many eye drops I used, my eyes are still red veined and swollen.

I follow Russell inside, sticking close to his back so he forms a wall in front of me. Everyone is seated on the leather sofas, showered and dressed in their nicest clothes. The house is impeccably tidy and smells of fresh cleaning products. If I wasn't so somber, I'd smile at the effort they've made for me.

"Allie," Jonas says. "It's good to see you."

It's good to see him...well, it's good to see all of them apart from Oliver. He's the one who lied and manipulated. He's the one who caused this catastrophic end to what was the best week of my life.

Oliver stands, his hair slicked back, dark circles ringing his eyes and his usually well-trimmed beard unkempt. His shirt is crumpled, and his slacks need ironing. The straightness of his posture is absent, replaced by shoulders that slump and arms that hang loose at his sides.

"Take a seat." Stefan ushers me with an outstretched hand to an empty space across from Oliver and next to Tom. Even though every fiber of my being is screaming at me to run out the door, get back in the car and leave again for good, I force myself to sit, smoothing my pants over my knees.

"I'm not sure why I'm here." I mean to address them all, but really, I'm focused on my fingers that are twisting in my lap.

"Oliver has something he wants to say, and after, we all have something to ask you."



I don't want to look at Oliver at all. The betrayal I feel is like a knife in my heart, but I force myself because I want him to see the pain he's caused me. When our eyes meet, he winces. Good. Let him feel even half of my grief and anger.

"When I arranged this assignment, it's because my uncle advised me to look for a replacement for Kirsty. I'm not the kind of man who believes in coming up with twenty questions to ask in a stark interview room. I wanted to see you in action. I wanted to understand your process and see if you'd be capable of taking over from Kirsty and doing something revolutionary with the magazine. Readership has been dropping. Competitors are taking a greater market share. We need to do something."

"So you came here under false pretenses?"

"I came here to participate in your assignment. My views would be as valid as anyone else's here. As you know, I didn't lie about my qualifications to take part in this."

"Why didn't you withdraw when you saw the direction things were going?" I ask. "Why did you carry on...why did you...?" I trail off, not able to finish the sentence with 'fuck me' without breaking down. I tip up my chin, gritting my teeth, battling to hold back tears.

"I wanted to. I really did, but Kirsty knew I was here. I didn't have any legitimate reason to leave. I tried to steer the group in a different direction...I made excuses to you to leave...but then things started to spiral. And then..." He touches his cuff, tugging it over his wrist. "Then I wanted you, and I wanted to be a man who could make you believe in yourself. It felt like I had a chance to encourage you."

“And fuck me.”

He hangs his head, bringing his hand to cover his face. “Look. I know I messed up. I know I hid a lot from you, and you are right to be mad.”

He stops there, flicking his chestnut eyes up to meet mine. I can hear the ‘but’ that’s hanging between us, which surprisingly, he doesn’t say.

“And now, what happens, Oliver? You wanted me to take over the magazine, but I won’t be able to now. Even if you believe I’m good enough, everyone will think it’s because we fucked.”

“Well, they’d be wrong.”

“He thinks you’re good enough,” Stefan says. “In fact, he wants you to move to another part of the business and write for The Reporter.”

The Reporter. That would be my dream job. Serious journalism. A fearless approach to the topics it covers. Opportunities to carry out deep investigations.

“I read your stuff,” Oliver says. “The drafts you sent Kirsty before she messed with them. They were filled with insight and empathy. It’s what The Reporter needs to make it more in touch with readers.”

I flop back against the couch, unsure of how to react. Oliver deceived me and tore my career out from underneath me. Now he’s handing me my dream, but how can I take it?

Stefan clears his throat. “I know this is hard to take in.”

“My naked body is all over the internet,” I hiss. “My most erotic sexual experience is going to be in the public domain forever.”

“All I can say is I’m sorry, Allie. I’ll forever be sorry that I couldn’t do anything to protect you from that.”

“Oliver wasn’t honest about who he is,” Stefan says. “But he’s not responsible for the images. He’s still trying to find out exactly who was the culprit.”

“It’s an extreme invasion of privacy,” Oliver says. “Someone is going to pay for their role in it.”

“What about Kirsty?” I ask.

“I’m not happy with the way she handles her role at the magazine. She’s not developing talent. She’s keeping everyone working within a rigid framework that’s becoming dated. I still need someone to bring it up to date.”

“Grace,” I say. “She has what it takes. The magazine is her life. She’ll dedicate herself to the role entirely.”

“You’re really putting in a good word for the woman who spoke to you so dismissively?” Jimmy asks.

“She’s not a bad person,” I say. “She didn’t rat me out. She was just shocked, I think. And maybe a little worried about the potential repercussions. In a way, she was right to be. And she’s the one who called me as soon as she saw the images. It was her first instinct.”

“Okay,” Oliver says. He shakes his head, his stooped shoulders remain even though we’ve covered a lot of ground.

“Is there anything else you want to ask?” Stefan shifts forward in his seat.

“What can be done about the images?”

“Oliver’s been talking to his legal team. They’re going to threaten action against every site that’s hosting the pictures. It might work to get the highest profile sites to remove them.”

I guess that’s all that I can hope for.

“You said you had something to ask me?” For the first time since I sat down, I gaze around at the group of men gathered to hear this conversation. Every set of eyes I meet is filled with compassion.

Next to me, Tom reaches out and tentatively takes my hand in his, but it’s Theron who leans forward, resting his forearms on his knees. “The proposal was my idea. I wish I could say I regret suggesting it for all the damage it’s done, but I don’t. These past few days have been the best of my life.” He glances around the group. “The best of our lives.”

Tom squeezes my hand, bringing tears to burn in my throat.

“We don’t want this to end,” Gabe says.

Jonas, whose leg is bouncing up and down with a coiled tension that needs releasing, shakes his head. “You guys are handling this all wrong. It doesn’t need to be some kind of serious reality TV confession. Allie’s not that kind of girl. She needs us to be real. She wants us to be ourselves.” He turns to me. “Allie. You’re my dream girl and I want you in my life.”

Dream girl. Is he serious?

“I want you in my life too, Allie.” Jimmy, who rolled his eyes at his friend’s outburst, is first to agree.

“And me...us.” Gabe nudges his cousin. “We feel the same.”

“We’d tattoo our names across your heart so that no one else ever touches you again,” Carson practically growls.

“Speak for yourself.” Clay reaches out to take my other hand. “I know you’re hurting right now, but things will settle down, and when they do, we can make a good life together. Something different, but special.”

Russell clears his throat. “I hope you know how I feel,” he says. “Just know that whatever happens in your life, I’ll be there to support you, to love you.”

“It’s what I want too,” Tom says, but this time he brings my hand to his mouth, kissing my knuckles tenderly.

“I know it’s hard to hear right now. It’s hard to trust anyone after what happened, but this week has changed my perspective on things.” Stefan rubs his chin nervously. “I thought I was too old to want a family, but I’ve realized I do. I forgot how much I missed living with other people...this week has opened my eyes and I realized that I can’t imagine walking away from this house and you not being in my life.” He glances around. “All of you.”

I look to Oliver, who’s been silent through all of it. “I feel the same, but I don’t have any expectations that you’ll ever be able to forgive me for what happened.”

“I don’t understand.” I squint at them all, frustrated and uncertain. I don’t believe they’re all seriously declaring feelings for me. My life is hanging by a thread, and they want

me to choose between them. How much more stress do they think I can deal with?

“We want you,” Theron says. “We all want you.”

I stand, my despair now turning to fury. None of this is fair. None of it.

“I can’t choose between you. You should know that. And shame on you for putting this kind of decision in my hands when I’m barely hanging on to my sanity.”

“Allie.” Tom snags my hand again, standing to tug me into an embrace. “We’re not asking you to choose between us. We would never put you in that kind of position.”

I blink up at him in confusion. “So, what then? I’m just supposed to walk out of here knowing you each have feelings for me. I have to just leave all of this behind? I wish you didn’t tell me. Why would you do that?”

“No.” He smiles at my confusion, which only makes me feel more unhinged. “We want you to stay here and be with us all.”

“Stay here?”

“Well, there’s a lot to sort out,” Theron says. “We all have jobs to go back to.” He raises his hands in apology when he realizes how that sounds with my career balancing so precariously. “But Oliver has offered this beach house so that we can have a home together. While we all get our lives in order, we can meet here at weekends and use any vacation time to spend time together. We can start slow and build this into something amazing.”

“You all want to be with me, at the same time?”

The men all nod in sync, confirming their idea.

It's what I longed for so many times, but I never thought it was possible, and here they all are offering me my dream on a plate.

"What about your families, your jobs, your lives?"

"All of that can be dealt with in time. I'm not saying everything's going to fall into place without any issues." Gabe looks at his cousin and they share a pertinent glance. "Our families are probably going to be crazy for a while. I'm sure there will be many other people who won't like this idea. But we know what we want. We know we can make it work. All we can do is try...that's if it's what you want too?"

The tears that have been a burning ball in my throat spill down my cheeks. The relief I feel at not having to walk away from this house a second time almost makes me drop to my knees. All the times I told myself that I'm crazy for wanting what Dawn has, echo in my mind. All the times I told myself I was making a mistake for being intimate with these men, risking my career and morals for pleasure and connection now ring hollow.

They want what I want and tried and failed to bury under a heap of sensible arguments.

They want me. They want this crazy life that was supposed to be over in seven days to stretch out into the future.

Tom swipes my face with the pad of his thumb, and all around me, men stand to crowd closer, passing me from one embrace to another, filling me with encouraging words and

soothing touches. I collapse into each one of them, the relief to be in their arms bringing fresh tears.

“You’re okay,” Russell says, tipping my chin so he can stare into my eyes. “Everything’s going to be okay.” When he kisses my mouth, I fall into the sweet affection, gripping his shirt in my fists, holding on for dear life so he never lets me go.

“Is that a yes?” Jonas asks. “Don’t keep us waiting. You’re killing these men slowly right now.”

I pull away from Russell, laughing in a nervous bubbling kind of way that’s part joy and part overwhelming relief. “Yes. It’s a yes.”

The whoop from ten huge men sets the chandelier tinkling, and then they’re backslapping and bro hugging, and I’m lost in the jubilation and warmth.

Can I see a clear future in front of us?

No. There will be many hurdles to overcome.

Do I think every day is going to be a bed of roses?

I know from Dawn that large harem relationships face challenges like any other.

But do I have faith that we’ll all try our hardest to make it work?

I do.

I started this journey resenting my boss and the subject matter I was tasked with writing about. I had dreams I didn’t feel confident enough to chase and a lack of intimate experience that filled me with regret and shame.



Things may not be perfect, but I can see a route forward that promises greater happiness than I ever thought possible.

Jumping in headfirst has never been my strength, but with these men, I'm excited to take the plunge.

This started with a question 'does size matter'.

For me, it's a definite yes!

Yes, times ten!

# EPILOGUE

# CLAY

And we all lived happily ever after!

That's what you're expecting me to say, isn't it?

But that wouldn't be real. You can't throw ten men and one woman into a giant untested relationship and not have some bumps along the way. Add in the drama surrounding the photos, Oliver's betrayal and family issues, and Allie's work challenges, and for a while we all felt as though we were walking a plank.

But with ten of us to support Allie and Oliver working his ass off to get those photos taken down wherever he could, the exposure became a low rumble in the background of our connection. But it didn't go away.

That's the internet for you. A digital footprint is like one of those caveman footprints that end up as permanent fossilized rock.

Our reputations were smeared, but then Stefan contacted Laura McGregor and she invited us onto her reality TV show, McGregors Uncovered, and we hoped things might change.

"How do you guys do this all the time?" Allie asks Laura as a makeup artist brushes her face with something dusty.

"I'm used to it." Laura grins, glancing over at Ford and Donnie, who have been instrumental in briefing us on dos and don'ts in front of the camera. "It took longer for my guys to

accept it was going to be a longer running part of our lives than one season, but we also got better at managing the parts we show and what we keep private.”

“A lot of our relationship has been made more public than we’d have liked.”

Laura nods. “Yeah, that happened for us too, but it became less of an issue once we started filming and people decided they liked us, despite the unconventional relationship.”

Allie’s eyes flick to mine, worried. “You think they could like us the same way?”

“I think they’ll love you.” Laura reaches out and grabs Allie’s hand and I’m filled with warmth for this woman who saw another’s distress and wanted to do something to assist. “Especially when they see you with us and hear the background to your love...I mean, it’s a hilarious story.”

“Yeah. I think the fact that my article has been well received will help.”

Grace published Allie’s article in its entirety without editing. I guess a new broom sweeps clean. She’d experienced Kirsty’s controlling hand and maybe she could feel the raw honesty in Allie’s confessions and understood that that honesty would touch readers more than anything she could redraft.

“I loved your article.” Laura places her hand over her heart. “I loved how vulnerable you made yourself but also how you showed the vulnerability in each of the men. And how negative objectification can be.”

“You objectify my cock all the time,” Ford pipes up, and the whole room erupts into laughter.

“You see what I have to deal with?” Laura rolls her eyes, but she’s stifling a grin. “I hope you’re ready for a lot of cock-talk. There’s no getting away from it.”

“You mean today?” Allie widens her eyes, and Laura laughs.

“Well, yes, today. But I meant for the rest of your life.”

“Yeah. Well, it’s kind of inevitable because of the way we met. They’re always reminding me that the basis of our relationship is ten times ten inches.”

“A hundred-inch foundation sounds good to me!”

They both snigger and warmth spills through me to see Allie happy and relaxed. It’s been a while since I saw glimmers of the woman she was when she started exploring her sexuality with us. If being featured in this show can bring that part back, I’m all for it.

“Hey, Clay. I love your tattoos.” Donnie drops onto the couch next to me and stares at my right arm intensely.

“I love your art, man.” We took a tour of their home before makeup and Donnie’s stunning paintings line the walls.

“Thanks.” His strange ethereal eyes drift to my face, fixing there as though he’s seeing me but also seeing through me. “You know, you have an interesting aura.”

I blink, wondering what the hell he’s talking about, but Laura interjects.

“Donnie sees the world a little differently. He sees colors where other people see dead space.”

Donnie leans forward, resting a hand around an inch from my hand. “Your aura is red most of the time, but when you

touch Allie, it's all pink."

"Pink?"

"Yeah. You're the one who finds the middle ground, right?" I nod, finding it weird that he'd be able to tell that about me just by looking. "But when you look at Allie, when you touch her, you're all about the romance."

I rub my upper arm and stare at my girl, watching as the makeup artist applies a pretty pink gloss to her lips. She's dressed in a fuchsia pink blouse and shorts set, and her toned tanned legs are crossed at the ankles demurely. She has a vibrancy about her that the bright colors reflect, a light that pours from inside her that I find mesmerizing. Donnie's right. When I look at Allie, all I feel is love and romance.

And when it's my turn to make love to her, that time between us is all about forming a deep connection that tangles and twists like the jungle vines that mark my body.

"He's romantic." Allie presses her lips together, smushing the gloss. She touches the gold chain that hangs at her neck and the feather charm that adorns it. When I gave it to her, she asked why a feather. I told her it's because she's an angel to me, and also, it represents a quill, because she's a writer. She hasn't taken it off since.

Last night she asked me and Carson to tattoo her pretty skin; ten tiny stars along her spine.

I'm not a man who cries easily, but her request brought a lump to my throat that I had to swallow down quickly.

"I'm done," the makeup artist says. "That's the most faces I've worked on in one go for a long time."

“The perils of working with insatiable women,” Laura quips, and we all laugh at the extra blush that colors Allie’s cheeks.

“Do you ever get used to everyone thinking you’re some kind of nymphomaniac?” Allie asks as we head to the deck where everyone is gathering.

Laura rests her hand on Allie’s shoulder. “Just remember that every woman out there wishes they had even one man as good as any of the ten you have.”

When Allie nods and she turns to search me out, my heart swells like a balloon in my chest.

After the shoot is over, we travel back to the beach house in our luxury minibus, bought by Oliver to transport the group. We’re all buzzing from meeting the McGregors and hearing about their lives. While filming was in full swing, we shared what it feels like to be in a reverse harem relationship with more raw honesty than I expected. The McGregors are all so chill about being open in front of the cameras that it rubbed off on us. During filming, I worried that the press might twist our honesty against us, but now, I think it will work in our favor. Allie’s article was the start of trying to take back some power to control the narrative about us. This TV show will hopefully continue the progress.

“When will we see the finished show?” I ask Allie, who’s sitting next to Carson with her laptop open in front of her.

“I asked if we can see it before it airs. I got the agreement from the producers, but we won’t have any control over what

it looks like. We knew that from preliminary discussions, though. It is what it is.”

“Yeah. I can’t see how they can twist anything. And I watched the first episodes of McGregors Uncovered, when their relationship was new, and they were trying to prove something to the world. The production team handled everything very respectfully.”

“I couldn’t be in front of the cameras all the time,” Allie admits.

“Me either.” Carson stretches his hands over his head and cracks his neck. “They did a good job but it felt really fake to me. The whole thing involved too much smiling and gushing over things that are just everyday life.”

“Everyday life to you,” I remind him. “But totally out of this world to the majority of the population.”

“I guess I forgot that part.”

I smile at my buddy.

It’s been a big upheaval to leave my job, but knowing Carson is in the same situation has made it easier. Oliver suggested we convert one of the small rooms in the basement to a tattoo studio so we can work from home. It’s taken a while to decorate and gather the equipment we need, but we’re almost up and running. Allie put us in touch with someone she knows whose boyfriends own the chain of tattoo parlors called Ink Factor, in case we’d consider a franchise. It was great to talk to the boss, Carl, but we’ve decided to do our own thing. I think we both need flexibility right now.



Tom and Russell have joined Gabe and Theron working construction. They have to stay away during the week to finish projects right now, but they're beginning to build up a funnel of work closer to the beach house, so things should settle down there.

Stefan also has to stay away Monday to Friday because of the nature of his job, but we quietly step aside over the weekend to ensure he and Allie get some much needed time together.

Jonas and Jimmy have worked out schedules to keep some of their old clients but build up a list of new ones closer to the beach house.

Where we can, we're renting out our places or letting our leases expire.

And Oliver has retired. Well, he was forced to take a step back from day-to-day operations following the scandal. He's okay, though. His inheritance and the profits from the businesses are more than enough to live very comfortably on, and he's decided to write a novel. Knowing Oliver, it will be a runaway bestseller.

Most importantly, Allie is focused on her new career, writing articles for The Reporter. I initially worried she was going to find it overwhelming, but it's like she's come alive, tackling challenging subject matters with empathy and perspective.

She's had to travel, and it's hard when she's away, but having the other men around makes her absence less lonely.

Her parents were initially angry and upset, but Allie's new job carries prestige and a very healthy salary. They reluctantly came to spend a day at the beach house and Oliver turned on the charm, bringing in caterers and serving the best champagne. They were reserved at first, but gradually seemed to accept Allie's new life with us.

I guess they didn't really have a choice if they wanted to continue to have a relationship with their daughter.

It should have been almost impossible to bring eleven people from different walks of life together in a new location, but we've all done what we can to make this work. It just shows that when something is worth it, even the greatest effort feels like nothing at all.

"What's the plan for when we get home?" I ask. At first, it didn't feel right to call the beach house home, but Oliver's made it clear that we should.

"Movie night," Allie says. "I can make tacos and Russell can make his famous caramel ice cream sundaes."

"I'm going to have to let my pants out at the waist if this carries on."

Allie rolls her eyes. "The amount of time you guys spend running up and down the beach, I don't think that's ever going to be a possibility. As for me..." She glances down at her slightly fuller figure, wrinkling her nose.

"Don't say whatever you're thinking. There's not enough of you to go around."

"A woman's curves are a man's paradise." Allie and I both focus on Carson, surprised at his poetic outburst.

“He’s not lying,” I agree.

I turn to the rest of the bus and the men, who are mostly half asleep. “Taco movie night with Russell’s ice cream sundaes,” I call out.

Surprisingly, everyone straightens in their seats, glancing out the window to assess how far we are from home. It just shows how much men love their food and what we hope will be on the menu after!

When we arrive home, Carson’s dog, Buster, is so happy to see us that he almost knocks Allie over and we all end up spending five minutes by the front door while he climbs everyone for affection. We were initially worried about him settling into a new place with so many strangers, but he loves it here and everyone loves him too. His favorite part of the day is running along the beach with whoever feels like getting some exercise. Sometimes it’s one or two of us, sometimes it’s all eleven. He’s always out front, his tongue lolling and eyes bright, spraying up the sand with his eager feet.

Later that night, with Buster settled at our feet, we prepare for movie night. It’s Allie’s choice, but it’s not a rom com, not that I have any objection to funny, light-hearted movies. There are two rules when it comes to choosing entertainment in this house. No horror because Allie and Gabe have nightmares, and no war movies because Russell can’t relive his trauma. Allie’s chosen *Pretty in Pink* and we snuggle up together on the couch with popcorn and candy and Russell’s ice cream spectaculars.

We don't have written rules about who gets to spend time with Allie anymore. We're all conscious of not treading on each other's toes, and Allie is an expert at sharing herself fairly. It's been a while since I had prime place with Allie on a movie night, so I soak up the way she rests her head on my chest, even when I start to feel my arm and shoulder going to sleep.

I don't take anything for granted. Even the little things are cherished.

We came so close to losing it all and that's given us a healthy perspective.

After the movie, Allie stretches her arms above her head and groans. "This day has destroyed me and I'm meeting Natalie at the break of dawn for one of our walks."

"So, no sex tonight?" Jonas's upfront way of handling life used to grate on me, but now I'm just grateful that he gets away with cutting to the chase so shamelessly.

"As if!"

"That's my girl." He swoops in and throws Allie over his shoulder and carries her down to the basement room that we've kitted out especially for fun times. Oliver commissioned a carpenter to make a giant bed frame and then found a company that could make a mattress big enough for eleven people. He didn't tell them what it was for, just said he has lots of kids and he's a big believer in the value of co-sleeping!

By the time I jog down the stairs, Allie is sprawled out in the center of the bed, most likely where Jonas dumped her unceremoniously. She's laughing and tugging off her yoga

pants and slouchy luminous yellow shirt as all around her, men tear off their shirts.

“My eyes, my eyes,” she gasps, throwing her arm across her face to obscure her vision. “Are you trying to kill me with all that manly sexiness?”

“Don’t complain, woman! We work hard to look like this for you.” Theron leaps onto the bed, as naked as the day he was born, and slaps Allie’s ass, and she playfully tries to escape before he can do it again.

Russell, who’s standing next to me, shakes his head. “I knew all that caramel was a bad idea. They’re like kids who can’t eat too much sugar.”

“They’ll be out like a light as soon as they’ve had some sex,” I laugh.

Oliver, who always insists on hanging his clothes neatly over the chair, sets some music to play over the speakers. It’s something soulful and mellow, and Allie whoops and throws her half naked self at him, dragging him into bed. “Stop being such a neat freak...”

“Oh, you want me to be messy?” He takes her face tenderly between his hands and kisses her first on the forehead, then on the tip of her nose before he takes her lips. When Allie’s breathless and panting, she pulls back. “No. I want you to make me messy.”

There’s more whooping and everyone dives onto the bed, but it doesn’t take long for it to get serious. When Carson strips Allie’s panties over her hips and thighs, the room gets silent real quick.

“Hang on.” She puts her hand up before anyone can get closer. “I think it’s time for me to appreciate the ten times ten inches.”

She laughs as we all line up naked as the day we were born, hands on our hips and cocks standing hard and proud. She walks in front of us like a cop assessing a line up, her hand trailing over our erections one by one, eyes feasting on all that is hers. “Mmmm...I am one lucky woman. One hundred inches of cock, and it’s all mine.” Her honey eyes fill with mischief as she meets our hungry gazes one after another, bending to kiss and lick, driving us crazy as she moves down the line again. It’s cute as fuck, and my heart swells at how much confidence she has when she’s surrounded by us. Gone is the restrained virgin who craved more but couldn’t let go. Our girl is sexy and sweet, a knockout combination.

Do I miss one-on-one sex?

Sometimes.

There’s an element of intimacy that’s hard to achieve with the equivalent of half a football team in the room. But it’s not possible for Allie to spread herself so thinly without us all having to wait ten days between sex sessions.

None of us wants that.

The compromise is that we each get a night alone with Allie on our birthdays, and we schedule individual evenings together in the run up to the holidays.

When Tom breaks first, tossing Allie onto the bed before he buries his face between her thighs, she sighs, reaching for his head. “You guys make me so happy, you know that?”

“We know,” Gabe tells her, leaning to kiss her sweet mouth. “You make us so happy, too.”

The sex is like a well-choreographed dance routine. We’re so used to working around each other now that it’s become second nature. We please Allie first, then we take our pleasure. When she taps out on her ability to orgasm anymore, we don’t push her, and often, when she relaxes again, it happens without anyone having to try too hard.

When it’s my turn, I don’t want convoluted positions or to share her with anyone else. I want her beneath me, holding me close, her deliciously soft, warm thighs cradling me while I rock us slowly. I hold her gaze and pepper her mouth with soft teasing kisses that make us both moan, and when I’m close, I tell her how much I love her and how good she makes me feel. I tell her how grateful I am that I agreed to take part in a stupid interview about my cock, and she tells me that she loves every bit of me, especially my ten inches. We laugh before we get serious, chasing our way to the breaking point of pleasure, stars spilling into my vision like the Milky Way, and Allie holding onto me like she never wants to let me go.

I love this girl more than I ever thought I’d be able to love a person, and I’m growing to love the men I share her with too, in a cool bro way, of course!

We came together to answer the question, does size matter? As I slip from inside my girl and she groans at the loss of my big dick, I’m almost certain the answer for Allie is definitely yes!

Yes, times ten, of course!

PS. Allie kept the ten purple vibrating dildos. I knew you were wondering what happened to them!

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## EXCERPT - [HUGE X4](#)

# 1

## WHITE LACE AND EMPTINESS

It's a big day for Kerry. A new beginning. A wedding day that two years ago we never imagined she would be preparing for. Life is funny like that. Even after experiencing terrible things, love can sneak up on you and make you whole again. At least, that's what Kerry told me last night as we shared some champagne, and I helped her resist the urge to break tradition and seek out her husband-to-be the night before the wedding. Did I believe her? It was hard not to. Life had knocked her down hard, but it had sent her Dean to raise her up again.

My sister emerges from the bathroom, her make-up done to perfection, wearing just the underwear she'd spent hours picking out in Macy's. She looks amazing.

"Wow," I say, shaking my head.

"Not bad for an old girl." She spins around laughing, and for a second, she morphs into teenage Kerry, wild and carefree. I want to join her so badly, but I'm coiled too tightly, too used to holding myself back so that I don't embarrass anybody, most of all myself.

“Thirty is hardly old. You want me to help you into your dress?”

She shakes her head. “I’ll be okay.”

I nod once and walk to the wardrobe to undo the dress carrier. The zip slips down as smoothly as a knife through soft butter, and I peel back the coarse black fabric to reveal the soft tulle beneath.

“It’s so beautiful,” I say, slipping it from the hanger and taking it to my sister.

“It was the first one I saw. I wanted it to be completely different from the last one.” For a moment, her face seems to freeze. It’s natural, I suppose, that she’d think of her first wedding at this moment. Most of us hope that we won’t be repeating that day in our lifetime, but when you become a widow in your twenties, it’s kind of inevitable.

“It’s okay to think about it,” I tell her. “It’s okay to feel a little wistful for that day too. Just because you’ve met someone new doesn’t mean it has to wipe away the past.”

Kerry smiles at me. “I feel as happy today as I felt the first time. That’s good, isn’t it?”

I squeeze her arm. “Of course it is.”

She smiles quickly as though she’s swallowing back the memories to focus on the present day.

I head back over to the closet and take my dress down. It’s a pretty silk tea dress that we chose together on one of our many shopping trips. I slide off my robe and pull it on, enjoying the soft slip against my skin. It takes time to fasten all

the little buttons, but it's worth it for effect. By the time I'm done, Kerry is ready too.

"Will you help me with my shoes?" she asks.

"Sure." I kneel at her feet and slip on her white satin shoes, fastening the buckle at each side. I smile up at her when I'm done. She looks like an angel in her ethereal dress with the Caribbean sun streaming through the window behind her.

"You'll find someone too, you know," Kerry says softly.

I shake my head because I don't want to go there. Not now when my face is made up, and I have my carefully crafted smile fixed in place.

"Brad was a douchebag. Nobody liked him, sweetie. You deserve so much more."

"I know," I say, standing quickly and fussing with my dress to cover up my discomfort. Although it's been months since I left him, it still feels raw. There's still a big hole in my heart where he carved out his space until I didn't know left from right or up from down. "Come on," I say. "Dean will be waiting."

Kerry's eyes are bright as we gather our final things together. She takes hold of my hand as we make our way from her honeymoon suite to the outdoor venue where the guests have congregated. Our father left when we were young, and although mom loves the limelight, Kerry had insisted that it should be me to give her away. That wasn't received well by mom, but Kerry has always been braver about standing up to her than I have.

“You know that the O’Connell twins arrived last night,” Kerry says.

“Oh, thank goodness,” I say, squeezing her hand. Dean’s two best friends, Callum and Liam, who were flying in from Dubai, had their flights canceled and were looking at alternative routes to make it in time. “Dean must be so happy.”

“He is. It wouldn’t have been the same for him if they weren’t here to stand with him.”

“It’s a little unorthodox having two best men,” I say.

“Well, they’ve all been friends since college,” Kerry says. “Plus, they’re identical twins, so they’re used to doing things together!”

As we get closer, she squeezes my hand tightly and pulls me to a stop. Her eyes are bright when she puts her hands on my cheeks. “Promise me that you’ll make the most of your time here,” she says. “You’ve been hiding away for so long. It’s time to come out of your shell again, sweetie. Don’t let opportunities pass you by anymore.”

I blink, trying not to get emotional. Before we came here, she’d sent me a notebook with the words ‘Don’t ever let anyone steal your sparkle’ on the cover in glittery silver cursive. I carry it everywhere with me as a reminder. Funny because I don’t feel like my sparkle has returned yet, so there’s going to be no giving it away in the foreseeable future. “I will,” I tell her, but she shakes her head.

“I don’t believe you when you say it in that reluctant way of yours. Brad is gone. The only person holding you back now

is you. And ignore mom, okay? She's been like herself but on speed ever since we got here...you know she's gonna say some stuff that's gonna be insensitive because that's just what she does."

She smiles at me and kisses me on my right cheek, and I pull her into the tightest hug possible without creasing both of our dresses.

"I love you, Sis."

"I know, sweetie. I love you too."

We draw apart, and I smile with genuine feeling this time. "Come on. Let's go make an honest woman out of you."

"Funny," Kerry says, but she's so ready to get to Dean that we are practically skipping towards the sea.

Kerry and Dean have chosen to get married outside on a grassy spot looking out over the ocean. A small group of friends and family sit, awaiting our arrival. A single musician plays a soft melody. At the front, Dean faces the other way, but as the congregation stands, he turns to see his bride.

I know I shouldn't feel jealous of my sister. She's an amazing woman who has been through so much and deserves all the love that this man has pouring from his eyes. But I am envious. No one has ever looked at me the way he looks at her, and I want it. I want it so badly that it's physically painful. A clenching in my gut and heart makes me want to fold in two and crumple to the ground. I don't, though. I pull myself as straight as I can, head held high, and I walk my big sister to where her knight in white linen is waiting for her. All eyes are

on us, and I look to find Dean's best men, who until now have just been the stuff of intriguing stories.

Two broad backs in crisp white shirts, dark hair cropped short at the nape and a little longer on the top. They turn, and I'm hit by four intense gray eyes that are made even more spectacular because they are framed by thick dark lashes. I see them taking in Kerry first, smiling broadly. Then both their gazes move to me, and I'm mesmerized. If I weren't currently holding on to Kerry's arm and being propelled along by her eagerness to join her husband-to-be, I'd probably have been fixed to the spot. I blow out my breath because the fluttery feeling in my tummy isn't something I'm used to. I don't remember the last time I was hit with such a wave of attraction. It's like a lightning bolt or a tidal wave. I blink slowly and watch as their smiles widen. I should smile back. I know I should, but my face isn't cooperating. I'm sure I look like a frightened deer, which is not a good look for a maid of honor.

Maid. I wince at the thought. Kerry is about to say vows for the second time, and I still haven't achieved my first. I feel my sister squeeze my arm, and I catch her looking at me and smiling. I beam back because she looks so full of hope and joy, and it's at least partly contagious.

At the front, she pauses so that I can take her bouquet, and then Dean is there, reaching for her hand, cradling it like it's a precious and fragile bird. I stand next to Kerry to witness her commit her life to Dean. Liam and Callum stand next to Dean to do the same.

The officiant makes quick work of the ceremony. One of the twins hands over the rings at the appropriate time, and my mind drifts, taking in the turquoise sea that spreads in front of us like a glittering carpet. I can't imagine a more perfect place to get married.

It's over so quickly I almost don't realize until the crowd begins to clap, and I turn to find Kerry and Dean engaging in a very loving 'first kiss'. Behind them, Callum and Liam are smiling at the happy couple, then they both look up and grin at me. Two sets of amazing white teeth almost blind me. It's like looking into the sun, and I blink slowly, feeling weak in the knees.

Kerry and Dean turn to the crowd, and everyone begins to cheer. Before they make their way down the grassy path between the white chairs, she turns to reclaim her bouquet. It's then that I realize that I am going to have to walk behind her, flanked by two intimidatingly good-looking best men. I don't get a chance to think about how I might avoid it. Twin one is there, taking my left hand and slipping it through his arm. I look down at where our bodies are now touching. Then, before I have a chance to respond, twin two is at my right doing the same thing. The soloist increases the tempo of the music, and we all parade back down the aisle.

I know my cheeks are on fire. I can feel the blood tingling at the surface. It's so ridiculous to be embarrassed simply because I'm innocently touching two of Dean's best friends, but I can't help it. I don't know these men, and they are unnervingly good-looking and confident in a way that makes me feel small and pathetic.

“You’re Bethany,” one of them says gently as we make our way toward the place the photographer has set up for the formal photographs. I nod because my tongue is also a traitor. “I’m Liam,” he says. “That’s Callum.” He nods towards his brother, and I glance over and nod too. God, this is awful. I’m cringing and embarrassed, and I just want this part to be over so that I can go and hide at the wedding reception and busy myself with the buffet and a triple gin and tonic. I know it’s not classy to get drunk at your sister’s wedding, but somehow it seems the only way I might get through this day in one piece.

“I’ll bet Dean is glad you made it in time,” I say when I manage to make conversation.

“Yeah,” Callum says. “We nearly didn’t. It was almost like something was working against us.”

“We were worried about getting on a plane by the time we found a route to get here. So much had gone wrong. It almost felt like a sign.”

“But you’re here in one piece,” I say.

“Two pieces.” Callum sniggers, and I blush again. I’m going to need to start introducing myself as beetroot-head before long.

“I think Bethany probably noticed that about us already,” Liam says in an almost scolding voice.

“You’ll have to excuse me if I get you confused,” I say.

“You won’t be the first,” Callum says.

“Or the last,” Liam adds.



“Can I tell you a secret?” Callum leans in closer as though he intends to whisper something directly into my ear, and I get a nose full of a delicious-smelling cologne rising off warm skin. I nod because I’m feeling dazed. “Liam has a little scar on his forehead. That’s how you can tell us apart.”

Liam leans in close to catch the end of Callum’s confession and sniggers. “There are other ways to tell us apart,” he murmurs, “but we’d have to take our clothes off for that.”

A shiver runs up my spine as I turn and am caught in his gaze. I don’t know what to say. Dark and dirty thoughts flash through my mind of two gorgeous men standing naked before me. What differences might they have? Scars? Birthmarks? Maybe something naughtier. My cheeks feel warm, and Liam leans in even closer. “I think you know what I mean.”

I inhale deeply. It’s a shuddering breath that is partly nervous and partly aroused. I mean, how could I not be? They smell so good, and their voices are low with a slight husky edge that is just dripping with sex.

It’s been such a long time since I thought about sex. Feeling worthless and down kills any kind of desire. I wasn’t expecting to be feeling like this now at my sister’s wedding, and certainly not about two men. I seriously must be losing my mind. Maybe it’s the sun. I was at the beach for a long time yesterday. It could be sunstroke.

“Are you okay?” Callum asks.

I nod, and Liam chuckles. “I think she’s blown a fuse!”

I look between them and snap myself back into reality. I’m here for Kerry. She needs me to keep my mind on the job —

Maid of Honor extraordinaire. “We need to go over there for the photos,” I say and walk away, leaving them behind.

## 2

### COCKTAILS AND GAMES

The photoshoot is painful, not because I'm conscious of having my picture taken but because it's hot, and when I'm not required, I don't know where to put myself. Callum and Liam are standing on the opposite side of the photographer, so I end up catching eyes with one or both of them way too much. Every time it's like the slide of warm hot chocolate to my insides. Every time they grin at me with wickedness dripping from their mouths, I exhale a shuddery breath. This isn't normal. I've met twins before, and they've never been like these ones. There's a synchronicity about them, as though they think with one mind and move with one body. Their eyes always find me at the same time, and they're not conferring.

When the photographer has completed all the required shots, I grab my mom's arm and practically sprint her up the path to the reception. Callum and Liam are walking not far behind, and when they laugh at something Dean says, the deep rumble hits me straight between the legs.

God, I need a drink and some cool water on my wrists. And someone to put some sense into my head. That would usually be Kerry, but somehow, I don't think now is the time for me to admit that I'm thinking naughty thoughts about the

twin best men. She's got her own man to think about and a party of guests to socialize with. I will need to do some of that socializing, too, especially with the relatives who have turned up from far and wide.

I hit the bar, ordering mom a mimosa and myself a double gin and tonic, then we begin to mingle with the guests. Seeing the family, we haven't been in contact with for a while is amazing. Time slips past, and before you know it, cousins are married with kids you've never even met. There's so much warmth that my heart melts a little. Family is everything. It's easy to take them for granted, especially when you're wrapped up in your own troubles and dramas. For the first time in a long time, I feel as though my vision has cleared, and the world looks different, maybe because I'm different. It's impossible not to be shaped by your past. Bad experiences hurt parts of you that might never fully recover. They place doubts where you had none and insecurities where you were previously confident. They chip holes in your beliefs about who you are and what you are worth. People keep telling me that overcoming emotional damage is a slow process. I don't know if I'll ever shake off the scars Brad left behind. It's scary to think about ever letting myself trust someone again. I know I'm not ready to open my heart. There are still too many shattered pieces to glue together.

We all eat from the gorgeous buffet the attentive wait staff set out on a long linen-covered table. Then, when the plates are cleared, it's time for dancing. Dean and Kerry both have a fascination with 80s pop music and have obviously asked the DJ to focus on that because they're up and grooving in a flash. No serious first dance, just lots of exaggerated retro moves

that have us all in stitches. Most of the guests are up to join them by the end of the first song. I'm sitting at a table, nursing another gin and tonic and watching all the fun, when two large shadows loom over me.

"You wanna dance?" I gaze up to try and work out who said it. There's the little scar, so it must be Liam.

I shake my head.

"You don't dance?" Callum takes hold of the chair next to me and turns it so it faces the dance floor, and drops himself onto it. Liam does the same on my left.

"I don't dance," I say, shaking my head again, just so they're clear.

"Everybody dances." They both slip down in their seats as if settling in for a while; long legs stretch out in front, hands rest on strong-looking thighs.

"I mean, look at that guy..." I follow the line of Liam's gaze to where my cousin Dylan is trying to bust a move, belly jiggling in time to the cheesy tune, and I can't help laughing.

"That's exactly what I'm talking about," I say firmly. "Dylan is a perfect example of why not everyone should be seen trying to move their bodies in time to music...or, not in time in his case."

Callum snorts and shakes his head, turning to look at me. "Now, I agree that, like the case in front of us, some people are definitely on the lower end of the dancing spectrum, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't do it. Everyone should do it. It's fun even if you're uncoordinated." He turns to face me. "Are you uncoordinated, Bethany?"

I feel the heat rushing to my cheeks, not because I am but because he's leaning in and being in close proximity to him makes my body react. This near, I can see his face in more detail; the little creases at the sides of his eyes that reveal he smiles often, and the flash of his pupils as they pick up the color from the ever-changing disco lights. I shake my head.

"So what is it then?"

When I don't answer, he leans back in his chair and resumes watching the dancing, but with a thoughtful expression on his face.

"Everyone should dance," Liam says, taking a long sip from a very pink-looking drink. "It should be a rule."

"A rule?"

"Yeah, you know. Things that just are...like respecting personal space, not burping after you've eaten...that kind of thing."

"Those sound like basic social skills, Liam."

"Well," he says, shrugging. "Maybe they were bad examples. You wouldn't say people shouldn't sing if they didn't have nice voices."

"Yes, I would!"

"What, even in the shower?"

"The shower is fine, but not in public."

"Ah, so you dance but just in the privacy of your own home?"

"I'm saying nothing." I try to keep a straight face, and when I glance at him from the corner of my eye, I can see him

smiling.

“So anyway,” Liam says, swiveling around to look at me more closely. “Who told you that you can’t dance?”

“Who says someone told me?”

He narrows his eyes. “Whoever told you that is a douchebag, and everyone knows you shouldn’t listen to their shit.”

His gaze is intense, and I can’t hold it because I know he’d see the truth in my eyes that he was right. Someone had told me I was a lousy dancer, and I couldn’t forget it. Liam was also right that the man who had told me was a douchebag. The trouble is when you’ve been in love with someone, and they have managed to crawl inside your heart, it’s inevitable that they worm themselves into your head too.

“So it was a gorgeous wedding, wasn’t it?” I say, glancing over at where my sister is now wrapped up in her husband’s embrace, holding the hem of her dress so she doesn’t trip. Kerry looks so peaceful, and seeing her happy-ever-after should fill me with hope, but I’ve had so much of it squashed out of me.

“It was a lovely wedding,” Callum says.

“They’re two amazing people who deserve something good,” Liam adds. “We couldn’t be happier for Dean.”

“I know,” I sigh, hearing the wistfulness in my voice so clearly and cringing with embarrassment.

“So,” Liam says, loosening his tie and rolling up his sleeves. “Back to the dancing conversation. I have a plan.” There’s a twinkle in his silver eyes that makes my skin feel warm, and I

can't help noticing his strong, tanned forearms and broad shoulders. He looks like he was involved in some kind of manly sport in his youth; maybe he still is in his spare time. Callum does the same thing, and I smirk that they can't seem to remain in a position where they are different for more than a couple of seconds.

"I'm not sure I like the sound of that."

"You haven't heard what it is yet!" Callum laughs. "Give the man a chance."

"Well." Liam seems to pause for dramatic effect, or maybe he's thinking up this plan of his on the fly. "It involves alcohol. Plenty of alcohol and a long discussion about our favorite songs. And when we've all settled on a suitable anthem, there's the opportunity to stagger across the dance floor to that strange wedding DJ over there to see if he has our song of choice."

Callum snorts. "Great plan, dude." He leans across, and they fist-bump like they're teenagers. Cue my eye roll! I open my mouth to state my objections, but Liam interrupts. "Wait a minute, pretty lady. I haven't finished yet. The deal is that if the DJ has it in his collection, then we absolutely have to dance to it. If he doesn't, we'll come back here and watch all the fun. How about that? Deal?" Liam wiggles his eyebrows up and down with a huge grin plastered on his face, and I burst out laughing.

"We're taking that laugh as an agreement to the proposition," Callum chuckles.

"But just to make sure..." Liam sticks out his hand to shake on it, and I hesitate, wanting to do all the fun stuff with them



but not the dancing. “Come on, Bethany ...time’s a-wasting!” I hold out my hand with so much reluctance he bursts out laughing, then grabs hold of it between both of his and shakes vigorously.

“Err, you gotta shake mine too,” Callum says. I turn to find it outstretched and shake it gently as well, feeling stupid and worried but a tiny bit excited too. It’s that excitement that makes my throat burn a little, tears threatening. I like that feeling. It reminds me of a younger me.

“Right...drinks!”

Liam stands to scan the table, taking in the carnage of empty wine and beer bottles, then grabs my hand again and pulls me out of my seat. “We need the bar,” he says, tugging me across the dance floor, narrowly missing cousin Dylan, who’s veering to one side. I turn and find Callum behind us, watching with amusement. “That man should come with a safety warning,” he says as we pass through the reception room doors and into the external bar area. It’s quieter and brighter out here, and I wonder what I look like after so many hours of maid of honor duties. My hair is probably completely frizzy as the air is humid, and I know my forehead is shiny. I curse the gods for my high-maintenance appearance. Tottering on my heels as Liam comes to an abrupt halt, I rest my arms on the bar and look up at him. He’s at least a foot taller than me. Ridiculous really. If I hadn’t been wearing my highest heels, I might have looked like a twelve-year-old kid from behind.

“So many choices,” he says, grabbing the cocktail menu from where it’s resting in a pool of unidentifiable liquid and

shaking it off. Callum stands next to him. "Let's see...what kind of cocktail do we think you are?" He runs his finger over the drink options as he considers them, shaking his head as he discounts the ones he deems unsuitable. "Mmm...Sex on the Beach?" Liam looks down at me from the corner of his eye. "No, I don't think so. Too sandy." I snort out a shocked laugh.

"Screaming Orgasm?" Callum's raised eyebrow is amusing, but I try not to show it on my face.

"Nah, too reserved," Liam says. I put my hands on my hips and huff, but he doesn't seem fazed, switching his attention to the menu again. "Ah... I've got it!" The twins look at each other, and I stand on my tiptoes, trying to see what's being pointed at, but they turn their backs to me, like kids trying to hide their school work. "You want one of these?" Liam asks Callum. He nods.

"Why not. It's one of my favorite positions." He raises his eyebrow, and his eyes meet mine, then slowly drop lower until he's looked me up and down. I don't know how he does it, but I feel like he just peeled away my dress and underwear with his eyes. Liam waves the barman over, and I move to lean on the bar, hoping its proximity can protect me from whatever dark thoughts Callum seems to be conjuring.

Looking positively bored, the hotel employee drags himself to where we're standing and mumbles something that I assume is 'what would you like?' Liam grins over at me and then says in a very loud voice, "We'd all like a Long Screw Against a Wall."

I look at him aghast, then the barman smirks, "That'd be hard with three of you!"

“Not really,” Callum says. “One behind, one in front. You’d be surprised how easy it can be.”

The barman’s mouth drops open. He obviously wasn’t expecting that response. When he says nothing and turns to the back of the bar to begin our cocktails, Liam doubles over, attempting to laugh silently but failing abysmally.

“Oh my God,” I mouth at Callum, shaking my head in general disbelief. “I think he was close to having an aneurysm.”

“What?” He shrugs his shoulders as though he doesn’t get what all the fuss is about. It’s then that I realize that he wasn’t joking. To be so blasé, it must be something that he’s actually done. A threesome. With his brother?

My heart thuds in my chest. During the wedding service, I’d thought that my unexpectedly naughty thoughts about them were tightly in the realms of fantasy. Well, it seems they are for me, but not the twins. It sounds as though multiple love is a regular occurrence with them, and that thought has me squeezing my legs together.

Liam slumps down on a barstool and pulls me towards him by the wrists. “So, Bethany. We have the drinks; now we need the music.”

“It’s gonna take more than one cocktail.”

His eyes flash brightly. “One screw not enough?” he asks in a voice laced with pure, raw sex. My cheeks react like furnaces, and I die a little inside at my total inability to remain cool in the presence of these gorgeous men. “Hey,” he says, seeing my obvious mortification. “I’m just kidding around.” He

gently squeezes my wrists, and I look down with a golf ball-sized lump in my throat.

“It’s got to be a Madonna track,” he announces. “It’s Dean and Kerry’s wedding, so we gotta stick to the theme. How about ‘Vogue’!”

“Vogue?” I say, with all the exaggerated exasperation I can muster.

“What? She was the Goddess of the 80s.”

“She might have been, but that doesn’t mean I want to Vogue at my sister’s wedding!”

“Okay, you may have a point.” Liam looks to the sky seeking inspiration, but Callum provides the next song choice. “Wham’s ‘Wake Me Up Before You Go’?”

“Ugh. Too cheesy.”

“Billy Ocean, ‘Caribbean Queen’?”

“Ooo...I like that one,” I say enthusiastically, and Callum looks euphoric. “But no. Too groovy.”

“You’re a hard girl to please!” Liam says with a fake grumpy face, and I have an urge to smooth out his frown and turn it upside-down.

“How about Duran Duran, ‘Rio’?” I say.

“I like it...” he says after a few seconds, voice trailing and uncertain.

“What?” I ask, suddenly feeling like my suggestion was a terrible one. I want to paper over it so that he’s not displeased with me. “You suggest something else then,” I say quickly. Liam is still holding my wrists, which should feel weird

but is strangely comforting. His thumbs rest across the vulnerable inside of my skin, and he's looking down at my palms. Then his eyes flick up to mine, and I realize he was feeling my pulse, and he knew my heart was beating faster. He felt my embarrassment in his hands.

I pull away just as the barman turns, presenting three ridiculous-looking cocktails. "Wow," I say as he slides mine across the bar towards me, and I take a long pull at the straw, needing the relaxing effects of more alcohol just to calm my ridiculous social nerves. "Mmm, delicious."

Liam is quiet, and I don't like it. I turn to find the twins looking at each other. They don't say anything, but it's as though they communicate something silently. They both sip at their drink a few times, and Callum passes his key card so the cost of our order can be added to his room charge.

"I think," he says, turning to me with serious eyes, "That your idea is perfect and very clever. You want to know why?"

"I do."

"I think you chose it because you think the DJ won't have it."

I feel my heart sink into my chest. He thinks I'm a coward and that I'm trying to play their game and worm out of it at the same time.

"That's not why I chose it," I say quietly.

The twins don't say anything. They just look at me until the need to fill the silence is overwhelming. They are big, strong men, but they aren't arrogant. There's no real pressure here for me to explain myself, but I find that I want to. I want

them to understand, even though it's hard. There's something about them. I can't put my finger on what it is, but among the butterflies that I permanently seem to have in my stomach when they're near, I feel a sense of understanding.

So I tell them. "It was playing on the radio when I left my ex-boyfriend. It...it made me smile when he sings that bit about Rio dancing on the sand. I did that when I was younger and on holiday with Kerry. We went down to the beach with some of the locals our age, and they had an old ghetto blaster. We were so drunk and happy. It was like a sign that I was doing the right thing. Walking away".

There seem to be minutes of silent space between us, but it's really only seconds, and then Callum reaches around my shoulders and side-hugs me, tucking my head against his chest.

"Drink up," he says. "I've got an idea that'll blow this game out of the water."

# 3

## DANCING MY WAY TO HAPPINESS

The sand is slightly cold against my feet, where the heat left by the afternoon sun has cooled under the moon. Liam takes hold of my hand, leading me across the wide expanse of the beach until we're further from the hotel and closer to the sea. Callum walks beside me, close enough that I can smell his cologne and feel his presence almost as physically as if he was touching me. It's a perfect balmy evening, and I'm so grateful to be away from that stupid dance floor and the pressure to blend in. Even though I've only known these men for a few hours, I feel calm and peaceful.

We get to a spot that's away from the spread of the hotel, and they stop, dropping my shoes to the ground. Liam pulls out his phone and starts fiddling with it.

"What are you doing?" I ask, still puzzled by their sudden change of heart and the idea they seem so confident about.

"I'm looking for something. Have some patience, woman."

In the moonlight, as they stand side by side, they look gorgeously ruffled and so tall I have to crane my neck to see the top of them. Callum watches his brother, smiling to himself, and then Liam looks up with a triumphant grin.

It's then that I realize why.

The song starts with a ridiculous scraping sound and then moves into a frantic synthesizer intro before Simon Le Bon belts out the first lines of Rio. Liam rests the phone down in one of my shoes and takes my hand, pulling me up against him. I'm so shocked that I must feel like a plank of wood in his arms, but as he sways us slowly back and forth, I start to melt. I don't want to be the uptight person I seem to keep morphing into. A flash of memory spins itself into my consciousness, Kerry's hair fanning out behind her and my arms in the air as we danced our hearts out all those years ago.

I'm buried against Liam's chest, swamped by his size, but I feel bigger than I have in so long. The alcohol is warm in my stomach, licking inside me to soften my hard edges. We dance for a little while before I feel another hand at my waist. With perfect synchronicity, Liam releases me into Callum's waiting arms. Physically they are the same arms, but it feels different. Liam is light, and humorous, and Callum is something a little darker and more daring. Either way, I'm having so much fun dancing with them that I smile against Callum's shoulder, nuzzling against his solidness. Then he grabs one of my hands and spins me like a professional. I'm a puppet in his control, twirling with my hair coming loose and the skirt of my silk tea dress flaring like a lily's trumpet.

He doesn't have perfect rhythm, and being so big, he's a little heavy on his feet, but he smiles like he doesn't have a care in the world, watching me do the very thing I had imagined the day I left Brad. A cool breeze drifts across the beach, picking up loose tendrils of my hair until they whip over my face, and I love it. I love it all.



Then he lets go of my hand.

There's a moment where I think Liam will step in. Then, when I realize he's not going to, another second where I want to stop. I hear Brad's voice in my head telling me I can't do it, that I have two left feet, and I'll embarrass myself. Then I see Callum and Liam with their heads tipped to the sky, dancing euphorically, and I want that too.

I let myself go, raising my hands up like I used to, spinning with sand between my toes, swaying my hips, and starting to sing along.

I hear their voices join mine, perfectly out of tune, and it's amazing. When the song comes to an end, I look over at them grinning at me, and I burst out laughing.

"You're something else, Bethany," Liam says with pride in his voice.

"Yeah, baby," Callum says in agreement, and I feel like I might burst with joy.

"You're something else, too," I say, instinctively taking their hands in mine and squeezing. There's a flash of something in their eyes as I look at them; a dark look of longing that I feel reflected in my heart. Before I know what's happening, Liam has tugged me into a bear hug. I can't understand how I can feel so utterly content in the arms of a practical stranger. Then I feel Callum behind me, putting his hand on my waist and stroking my hair.

I feel the press of a kiss on the top of my head from behind, and Liam whispers into my left ear. "You remember something, Bethany. People might tell you things about

yourself, but you choose to believe them. You choose to let them change how you live your life. Anyone you meet who wants to change you is not someone you should be wasting time on, okay. You're perfect just being you. Remember that, okay."

Tears spring to my eyes, and I squeeze him tightly with one arm and cover Callum's hand with my other, wanting to convey how much it means to me that they're with me at this moment because I can't make the words come out of my mouth.

Liam tips my face to look up at his. "You decide how you want to live your life and the people you spend your time with. You choose, okay?"

"Okay."

He lets me go, and I turn to Callum, who pulls me in for a hug too. "You know, I hate to say this, but my brother's right."

I hear a grumbling sound from behind me and laugh, and as I do, another little piece of me seems to fall into place. I've missed laughing so much. The genuine bubbling laughter that comes from a place rooted in your soul.

I sense them both turning to look back towards the hotel where two of the most important people in our lives have become a unit, and I feel as though they're going to suggest that we go back to the reception, but I don't want to. It's already so late, and anyway, I'm confident Kerry won't mind. She's happiest when the people she loves are happy.

"I don't want to go back yet," I say quietly.

Callum doesn't say anything but looks down at me with serious eyes. "What do you want to do then, Bethany?"

"Stay here, just us."

He nods, and I go to pull back. "And do what?"

I blush, thinking about what it must sound like to them. What am I asking for? To hang out on the beach with two men I suspect aren't strangers to sharing a girl. I feel hot between my legs thinking about what it would feel like to let them kiss me, to let them touch me in ways no one has since Brad. They're so much bigger that I can't help but imagine how far I would have to open my legs to wrap them around them. I think back to the picture Callum painted at the bar. One of them behind, one in front. What would that feel like to be so surrounded by big strong men? They wait for me to answer, but with all this sliding through my head like syrup, I just can't find the words.

"You remember what I told you, Bethany, about deciding. If you want something in life, you've got to learn to ask for it. No more hanging back, letting other people be in control," Liam says.

"I want to..." I trail off with so much heat in my cheeks that it's a wonder I haven't fainted.

"Tell us what you want," Callum says in the lowest, sexiest voice I have ever heard. "Because I think we might just give you anything."

I turn to face the sea and feel their eyes on me, waiting. Hoping maybe. The weight of their words presses against my heart. I wonder when my voice became so muted. When did

it become okay for me to silence my thoughts and feelings; my desires? When did I become ashamed of being the person that I am, enough that I'd conform to the version of me that someone else wanted?

For the first time in a long while, I don't feel sad about it. I feel angry. Angry that I lost myself for so long and desperate to find myself again. These two men have found a way to free just a little bit of me. The girl that once danced on a beach without a care in the world. I felt her again, that me from the past, and it's intoxicating. If I could just get back some more pieces, maybe the nagging emptiness I've been feeling for so long will leave me for good.

I want that so badly that my heart hurts.

I take a few steps towards the sea and let the cool water slip between my toes. The sea whispers in front of me, stretched out like a never-ending pool of obsidian ink. Behind me stand two men who feel like the key to something. But do I have the courage to ask for what I want?

In a few days, we're all going to leave this place; me back home and the twins back to Dubai. This time is like an interlude to my real life — a flash of time that stands away from reality. I could spend the rest of my time here plodding along, feeling the same, or I could be brave, and see if I'm right. If Liam and Callum, who I've been told are the best friends my brother-in-law could ever wish for, could bring back some of the old me.

I turn slowly and find them standing like mirror images, hands in pockets, heads cocked to opposite sides. "I want...

you to kiss me,” I say, looking down so I don’t have to see their reaction.

A gust of wind tugs my skirt closer around my legs, and I can hear the rustling of their feet on the sand. Fingers lift my chin, holding my face gently. It’s Callum, and he smiles lazily as our eyes meet, leaning in to press his lips against mine. Our first kiss is so sweet, sweeter than I ever would have imagined Callum would be. It’s a simple and soft hello that swells my heart, and the way he holds me gently, his big hands resting on my upper arms, has me melting. He moves against me so softly that when he pulls away, I lean forward, following his mouth as it retreats.

Callum steps aside, and Liam steps in, slipping his hand into my hair and drawing me towards him. His lips are hungrier, maybe because he already watched his brother do this exact same thing only seconds earlier. I can taste the cocktail on his lips, and the passion in his grasp, and I put my hand on his neck, drawing him closer. Then he, too, pulls back.

“What?” I say, not understanding why he’s stopped in the middle of something so amazing. Wondering if this is how it’s going to be, passed back and forth between them.

“What else, Bethany?”

The question takes me by surprise. “What do you mean what else? Why did you stop?”

“What else do you want? We need you to tell us so that we know you’re sure of everything. We want you to feel in control of what happens next. You get to choose, baby, just you.” Liam strokes his palm over my hair, pushing back the wispy bits tickling my cheeks, but I can’t look at him. I feel too

raw, too seen, and it feels amazing and terrifying all in one big bundle.

How can a person go from being steered in life to taking the wheel? Brad had been emotionally manipulative, subtle in his cruelty, pick-pick-picking away until I looked down at myself and saw nothing but holes. It had been four months since I walked away, but the holes were still there, the wind blowing through and taking my courage with it.

It seemed that Liam and Callum could see the holes too, which was mortifying. That they wanted to help me fill them in with myself again was too glorious to comprehend. Dean had said his best men were the truest friends anyone could ever have, and I thought he was waxing lyrical. Now I see exactly what my brother-in-law was talking about.

“Bethany...” Callum says, caressing my cheeks. “If you can’t tell us, show us, baby. Show us what you need, and we’ll give it to you. We’ll give it all to you.”

My breath catches in my throat, and a tear slips past my restraint. Before I have a chance to wipe it away, Callum kisses me where it fell. It’s that simple gesture that gives me resolve. “I want you,” I say, taking each of their hands in mine. “I want everything.”

Liam strokes my hair gently, as though I’m something precious and fragile, and then he says, “Then that’s exactly what we’ll give you.”

# 4

## FINDING PARADISE

Liam and Callum had been right about me earlier that night. I'm not a 'sex on the beach' kind of girl. It's too messy, with far too much risk of sand abrasion in unfortunate places. I wasn't averse to being carried to their hotel room though, while they sang what had become 'our tune.' It's probably the alcohol that has made me feel so loose-limbed and unconcerned about what the world might think. I guess, to an outsider, we would look like friends enjoying a silly time while on vacation. I suspect that the truth would be far from the mind of the average person.

The resort is quiet, but when we pass Kerry and Dean's suite, we can hear giggling, and I am so unbelievably happy for them.

When Callum reaches his door, he rests me down and kisses me on the mouth. As he makes quick work of the lock, Liam presses his lips against my neck, only drawing back as Callum pulls me into the room. Liam follows closely, carrying my shoes and purse. There's a moment when the door clicks into place, and the room darkens, my heart skitters in my chest. In bare feet, the twins loom large with their eyelids lowered and eyes dark with desire. The air crackles with energy: the buzz that comes with anticipation, the discovery

of a new lover, and the pleasure that will come with it. I wait because I've given them the green light to everything and the look in their eyes says they will take it. I'm buzzing just thinking about what we're going to do, and so damn happy I'm finally in a place to draw some kind of line across Brad and his aftereffects.

And what a line it's going to be.

Callum is the first to pull his tie away from his shirt collar, watching me closely. Liam isn't far behind. There are little buttons down the front of my dress; covered ones that are fiddly to do up but easy to undo. As I flip them open one by one, their burning gazes follow the path of my fingers. There is a silk belt tie at the waist, and I draw it apart, not slowly but not too fast either. When I slip the soft fabric of the dress from my shoulders, I'm left standing in just my lacy cream bra and panties and the pearl-decorated garter that matched Kerry's. The twins step close enough that I can feel the heat and coiled passion rolling off them in waves. My head is level with Liam's broad chest, and I breathe him in; the warm scent of his cologne and the unique scent of his skin make me lightheaded. Callum moves behind me, sweeping my hair aside so that it hangs over one shoulder before he kisses my neck softly. I find myself leaning into him, gasping as his hands rest on my hips and grip.

Liam bends to kiss me, a soft slide of his lips over mine, a gentle tug as he pulls my bottom lip between his, the rumble of a groan as I hook my hand around his neck and pull him toward me. I open my mouth, wanting his taste and the slide of his tongue over mine. With it comes the delicious clenching



feeling I get between my legs when his hands clasp my bottom and squeeze.

My own hands are antsy, reaching to undo the buttons on Liam's shirt, wanting to see the impressive body I've imagined underneath his clothes and feel the heat of his skin against my palms. He pulls back and tugs the sleeves off quickly, standing before me, his chest rising and falling, eyes burning as he begins to undo his gray trousers too slowly.

"Watch him," Callum orders directly into my ear. The heat of his breath sends shivers spreading up my neck. His hands slide up my ribs and over my breasts, squeezing gently and then seeking out the front fastening. As Liam steps out of his trousers, Callum undoes the clasp, slipping the straps from my shoulders.

Brad had always hinted that my breasts were too small and spent time pointing out women in magazines with more impressive proportions. The way Liam looks at me wipes all that away. There's a moment when he hesitates to touch me, his hand hovering in the air as though he's enjoying the anticipation and imagining what I'll feel like in his palm. His first caress is gentle, and when his thumb merely grazes my nipple, I feel it pucker, seeking more contact.

"So beautiful," he says, his thumb passing back over the tip of my nipple, again and again, his eyes fixed on mine. I want to tell him to squeeze, to take it between his fingers and pinch it. Callum's hand snakes around from behind and does the very thing I'm craving to my other breast. The contrast is electric.

"Oh," I gasp, leaning into Callum again.

“She likes that,” Liam says, meeting the eyes of his brother.

“Soft and hard?” Callum responds.

“Yeah.”

I want to tell them that I’m pretty much guaranteed to like whatever they do to me, but my mouth is firmly clamped shut as they continue alternating.

As much as I’m enjoying everything, I need more. I need to feel their skin under my hands, so I allow them to wander, palms skittering as they slide up Liam’s sides, over ribs packed with muscle, then across nicely rounded pectorals until my thumb gently brushes his nipple. Liam hisses and takes hold of my hand, pushing it against his cock. And what a cock it is. For a moment, I think I must be confused. Surely this can’t be real. But as I explore, allowing my hand to wander, I realize that it is. My pussy clenches now, and I know what’s coming. I feel a little overwhelmed because these boys are identical so I know what Callum’s packing behind me is a mirror image. I’m hungry to see it, to know what his body is like in all its natural glory. When I move my hand to touch the waistband of Liam’s Calvins, he gets the hint and drops them.

Damn.

I stare open-mouthed at the cock Liam’s revealed. He takes hold of it at the root and squeezes, and I swear I almost come at the sight of him alone. It looks like he’s wielding a weapon, but fuck, he could club me to death with that thing anytime. I want to laugh because, in comparison, Brad’s cock was a wiener. No wonder our sex life was so dry. I bet Liam’s never had bad sex in his life.

“You’re looking at my cock like...I don’t know what,” he says, smirking.

“Maybe she’s never seen a cock that big,” Callum mouths against my ear. “You wanna touch it, Bethany? Make sure it’s real?”

Liam grins and winks, moving closer and taking my hand. “He doesn’t bite,” he says as he wraps my palm around the base. My fingers don’t meet it’s so wide, and the heat of him, the pulsing firmness. The sense of anticipation that he’s gonna fuck me with this massive thing soon has my pussy clenching as heat spreads between my legs.

“See,” Callum whispers. “His curves slightly to the right, and mine curves slightly to the left. That’s the other way you can tell us apart.”

“But we want to drive you so crazy that you don’t even care which one of us is fucking you,” Liam says, watching my hand slide up and down his length.

Behind me, Callum strokes his hands down my waist and over my ass, squeezing. Then I hear the rustle of fabric as he sheds his clothes too. Liam takes hold of my wrist and urges me to let him go. I groan with disappointment, but when he drops to his knees in front of me, I moan for another reason. He kisses my thighs, his fingers skirting around the lacy edge of my panties, teasing. He presses a kiss directly over my clit through the fabric, and I change my stance to open my legs wider.

“You smell so good,” he says, inhaling deeply. “So fucking sexy.”

There's always a moment when I'm with a new lover, and they're heading between my legs and I feel nervous. Brad never wanted to go down on me. He never came right out and said why but his reluctance made me feel self-conscious. Liam's reassurances have my body singing and my nerves disappearing.

"Lick her," Callum says. "Make her wet for me."

Liam wastes no time, pushing my panties aside and using his tongue to part my labia. I push my hips forward, giving him more room, and boy, does he use it. His thumbs spread me open then the tip of his tongue teases my clit. "Oh," I say as my legs start to tremble.

"Watch him," Callum says. "Look at the way he's worshipping you, baby."

I open my tightly closed eyes and look down at Liam. His gaze fixes on mine as he flicks my clit with rapid licks of his tongue. It feels so damn dirty and explicit, and I know I'm blushing. Then he winks at me, and I'm so close to coming I almost fall.

Liam pulls back, gripping me around my leg with one arm and using the other hand to test how wet I am. Fuck. The way his fingers slide around my opening tells him everything he needs to know. "She's ready," he tells his brother.

Then Callum's there in front of me, backing me towards the wall, his condom-clad cock held firmly in his hand. "I've been imagining fucking you against the wall since we chose those cocktails," he says. I don't tell him I've imagined the same thing because my mouth is so damn dry, and my brain

doesn't seem to be able to process thoughts into words right now. "Take your panties off," he orders.

I push them off my thighs and wriggle out of them until they hit the floor. Then Callum's there, lifting my right leg over his forearm and angling his cock to slide between my labia. "My brother made you so wet," he says, nibbling on my bottom lip. Oh, that sounds so damn wrong, but it feels so damn right. His cock notches at my entrance, and he pauses, looking right into my eyes, so close I can see the fan of blue and amber that spread outward from his pupils. He blinks slowly, pushing just a little bit. "You want this, baby?" he asks.

I nod because as much as what we're doing together is fucking crazy and so outside my realms of previous experience, it is almost laughable; I'm ready. As ready as I have ever been for anything in my whole sheltered life.

"That's my girl," he says, and with one strong thrust of his hips, he's deep inside me. "Fuck," he grunts. "So damn tight."

"Oh," I gasp as he pulls out and then pushes back inside even deeper. He's so big I can barely move.

Liam comes closer. "Put your hands above your head, Bethany," he murmurs. God, the thought of being held by one man while another man fucks me is too much, but I do as he asks and he takes hold of my wrists to hold me captive. "Does it feel good?" he asks.

"Yes."

Callum grinds deeper, using his free hand to cup my breast and pinch my nipple. His touch is harsh, my nipple stinging

momentarily, but I love it. Who knew there was such a strong connection between my nipples and my clit, one that only pain can activate. He thrusts deep and hard, squashing me against the cool wall. My pussy aches to come. All the sensations make my clit burn with sensitivity.

Liam's hold on my wrists is tight, his brow furrowed as though he's finding it hard to hold himself back. I can't imagine how frustrating it must feel to be so close to being able to fuck, but having to wait his turn. The thought of Callum pulling out and Liam replacing him is so naughty that I groan, bucking my hips to show Callum I want more. I want him to fuck me so hard I can feel it for days after. I want to remember this night for years to come. Remember the girl I am tonight: reckless, wanton, sexy, and free. So unlike the me, I've been since Brad.

Callum pumps me so hard that the foot that I was standing on rises off the ground, and I'm suspended by his strong body. Liam lets me go to put on a condom, and I notice his hands tremble a little as he rolls it downwards. To see that he's as frantic as I feel makes my heart ache. Who are these men who have managed to pull me out of my funk and turn me inside out? So strong but sensitive, too, the way real men should be.

Callum sees me watching his brother and slows. "You want Liam?" he asks. I look at him, trying to work out if there is any jealousy or resentment there, but there's nothing. He's smiling at me, perfect teeth glinting in the low light. I kiss his lips to let him know I'm with him, and he grinds against me more slowly. "Go get him," he says, swatting me on the ass as he pulls out. I'm left shaky-legged, and a little embarrassed, but Liam doesn't leave me standing.

He's there in seconds, grabbing me under the thighs, lifting me in the air as if I weigh nothing. I feel like a doll in his arms, totally at his behest, but also powerful in my mind and body. The sounds he makes as he kisses and licks my neck, walking me over to the bed, are needy. Greedy. His cock is rock hard between my legs, ready to push inside me. The thought makes me frantic. Desperate hands tug at his hair as my lips seek the warmth of his mouth.

Liam's kiss isn't chaste as he lays me down on the bed and rests his weight on top of me, pushing his hips to rub his cock against my throbbing clit. His tongue caresses mine in the rhythm of his hips until I'm mindless; clawing at his back, my leg hooking over his thigh to force him to push harder.

His hand moves to grasp my breast, his thumb seeking the hardness of my nipple and pressing down. We moan at the same time, but it isn't enough. I want heat and sweat. His hand is huge, cupping all my pale flesh with my nipple poking through his fingers. He pinches gently to start, then when I moan, he looks at me questioningly.

"Everything?" Liam asks." If you want it all, you've got to tell us what you like."

There he is again, pushing me, picking at my edges to peek underneath. Part of me hates it, but a bigger part tells me to stop being stupid. Isn't this what I wanted? To be cared about enough that what I wanted was what they sought to deliver.

Isn't that what we all seek?

Understanding.

Consideration.

Appreciation.

Callum and Liam seem to have it all in spades.

“Ask me questions,” I say, quietly. “I’m not good at this.”

He kisses me so gently then, as though I was a delicate flower he wanted to see open and show its beauty to the world.

“Do you like it when I pinch you?” I nod, and he grins. “Harder?” Another nod and a dirty smile. “Do you want me to lick you again?” This time my nod is accompanied by wide eyes and a tomato shade blush, which he runs his fingers over. “Sweet Bethany. I love the way you taste. I want to see your pretty pussy and feel it on my tongue.” He licks the soft underside of my top lip as if to demonstrate, and I taste the sweetness of the cocktail on him.

“What else?” I whisper.

“You tell me, baby! You like it long and slow or hard and fast?” When he smiles, it’s lazy, and the dimple on his left cheek suddenly appears, giving him a devilish schoolboy look.

“Both!” I say, with a bit too much enthusiasm.

“What the lady wants, the lady will get.” He rises up on his forearms, arms bulging as they take all his weight, and then pushes backward, so he’s kneeling between my legs. Liam’s finger caresses my clit, slipping down between my legs to gather more of my arousal. He seems transfixed by it, his head cocked to the side, eyes fully focused on the slow back and forth action. My thighs tremble at the sensation, and I have to slide my feet up the bed to stop my hips from rising up. “You have such soft skin and amazing legs. I’ve been looking at



them all day. Your ankles and these strong calves. Those killer shoes.” Liam laughs quietly. “I kept thinking about your thighs. What would they be like? What it would feel like to get between them?”

“Me too,” Callum says from his place at the edge of the bed. He crawls closer so he can stroke his hand over my hardened nipples.

“Well, here you both are. So, what does it feel like?” I ask softly.

Liam shakes his head as if words aren’t enough. “Can I tell you later? When I slide myself in here?” His finger moves from my thigh to press against my entrance, two fingers at least pushing inside. He groans, and everything in me stills except my frantic heart. I can’t breathe as he teases me with tiny movements, fingers slick with my arousal. I want him to just push inside me, to take me apart physically in the way his brother had, but he doesn’t. Instead, he moves to ease my legs apart, holding them spread, pressing me open with his weight. The cool air-conditioned air licks at my wetness, making my clit tighten and pulse, but all Liam does is look.

“You’re so pretty,” he says, “so lovely.” Then he bends his head to lick a long stripe between my parted lips, and I almost come from that one motion. His tongue is hot and rough, a perfect counterpoint to the cool air. Using the very tip, he nudges against my swollen clit, slipping against it over and over until I can’t keep my legs from coming up to hug against his head. “That’s it,” he says as Callum bends to kiss my mouth and swallow my moans. When I push my hips off the

bed, Liam says, "Take what you want, Bethany. Anything you want."

"Oh god," I say, chasing, chasing but not quite getting there. "I need...more, more."

And I know he has what it takes. I may not have felt Liam's cock inside me, but as it's almost identical to Callum's, I know what it's going to feel like when he pushes it in.

Big. Bigger than I've ever had before the twins.

Hard.

Hot.

Dominating.

There is something about a man who is well endowed that just makes me weak. I can't be alone in this. I've read way too many erotic novels to doubt that. Nothing makes a woman feel owned more than getting spread wide by a big dick, pinned in place by a strong man, and fucked until her head feels like it's gonna explode.

While I'm thinking about Callum and Liam's massive cocks, all it takes is the press of Liam's two thick fingers, his tongue licking, licking, licking at my clit, then a twist of his fingers as he thrusts them into the knuckle. I come with such a blinding flash that everything in me goes rigid; back bowed off the bed, toes curled, hands in fists as I ride the most cathartic orgasm of my life.

I want to shout "Fuck you, Brad!" at the top of my lungs, but settle for saying it in my head. Then I reach down to pull Liam on top of me, holding him so tightly around his middle he gasps and then chuckles. "That good, huh?"

“Oh yeah,” I whisper, pressing my open mouth against his skin and tasting the salty sweetness of him.

Liam laughs warmly and grins at me happily. I kiss his dimple and the corner of his mouth, the tip of his nose, and his shoulder.

“Where did you guys come from?” I ask, with so much awe in my voice that the sound of it makes me want to cry.

“I think it’s called Dubai,” Liam laughs.

“Men are from Mars,” Callum says, taking hold of my hand and kissing it.

I trace my finger over Liam’s eyebrow and the tiny scar he has above, filing all the little details that make him to memory.

He kisses my mouth, soft at first, then long, slow and deep. I can feel how ready he is, the hard press of his cock nestled in the groove between my leg and hip, nudging with every slide of his tongue. I run my fingers down his spine, the indentation between the muscles of his shoulders deep and strong, and then dig my fingers into his ass to let him know I’m ready too.

Liam’s hands trace my body, sometimes hard, sometimes soft. Always reverential.

“Can I make a request?” Liam asks.

“Of course,” I say, fascinated.

“I want you on top, Bethany. I want to see you take control. I want to watch you take what you want from me.” The way he says it, smooth and feather-soft, and the way his

eyes stroke over my face make my heart hurt. I know he's doing this for me, to give me the reins to what happens next. But maybe a bit for him too, so he's sure I'm fully present and in it for the right reasons.

"Okay," I say and watch as he moves to sit against the headboard, his body so big and strong and good.

I crawl towards him until I'm straddling his lap, legs spread so wide I feel a twinge in my hips. So this is what it feels like to have him between my thighs.

"That's it," Liam says, pulling me by the hips and raising me up over his cock, hauling me forward so he can lick and suck my nipples. "Put me inside you, Bethany. I want to feel you."

I reach between my legs to hold onto his cock, stroking it against my clit, watching it probe me in the most explicit way, then I push it towards my hole and rest back just enough for him to slide inside an inch. Liam's cock is so big and hard, and I'm so swollen from wanting it that it all feels too much. I rock back and forth, trying to open myself enough to slip down, but it isn't happening, even though Callum has already opened me up. I must have shown the frustration on my face because Liam tips my chin and tells me to relax, and kisses me sweetly to help me do just that. Using one of his hands to hold my hip tightly, he pushes himself up and me down. Another hand joins Liam from behind, and with both twins focused on the job, I'm suddenly full. When we're bone to bone, I flop against Liam, the sensations are too much, but he helps me, starting us in a slow rhythm that I eventually begin to lead. He feels so good inside me, big enough to stretch but

not to hurt, and the way he pulls me against his body gives my clit enough contact to feel the possibility of another orgasm rising inside me.

Callum's hands move to my breasts, kneading them gently and pinching my nipples in time to my movements. His hands slide around my hips and over my ass, squeezing with just enough bite to hurt. Then his fingers stroke between the cheeks of my ass. I seize for a moment, but Liam pulls at my hips, urging me to keep a rhythm. I'm not sure if I like what Callum's doing. Nobody's ever touched me there before, and it feels so dirty. So forbidden. And so good. Oh god. I shouldn't like it when he presses what I think is his thumb against my taint. He flexes, pushing on and off like the beat of a heart. He follows the movement of my hips, never letting me escape his filthy attention. And I find that I don't want to escape. I just want to fuck and fuck and fuck and come and come and come until I don't know where I am or where I'm going. Until I don't care what is up and what is down.

There is so much heat between us; sweat on my upper lip and glistening above Liam's collar bones, sweat in the dip at my lower back. Liam's lips are demanding now, tongue exploring until I feel lost in the pull and push that is everywhere our bodies are connected. My orgasm sneaks up on me, rolling up as a fast swell as Callum works harder and breaches the tight ring of muscle he's been pushing against. Liam clutches my ass and squeezes as I arch my back and cry out. "That's it, that's it," he whispers in hot gusts against my neck.

I come with a high-pitched moan, and Liam follows with a growl, everything pulsing and fluttering between us. He holds

himself so still as if all his muscles have seized from an overload of pleasure.

Callum waits, stroking my curves, kissing my hair until I've recovered enough to turn. His cock is so hard, and as blissed out as I am, I want to feel him come inside me too. I kiss his mouth, cupping his balls in my hand and rolling them, marveling at how heavy they are in my palm. He doesn't give me much chance to play though, before he has me on my back, cock surging inside me so hard it knocks the breath from my lungs.

"Fuck, you feel so fucking good," he gasps, hooking my legs over his shoulders to make the penetration deeper. I ache deep inside from where he's hammering my cervix, but I don't stop him. The desperation on his face is stark; deep lines etched between his brows and eyes clenched tight as he chases release. I'm not expecting to come again, but the power behind his hips is enough to make my pussy spasm. Fuck. I grip the sheets, body totally out of control now. Callum growls, his chest lowering on top of mine so that he can bury his face in my neck. I slip my fingers into his hair, and grip his ass, driving him faster against me. "Baby," he gasps, and I know he's nearly there.

"That's it," I say. "That's it, baby. Let it all go. Gimme everything."

He pounds into me four more times and then seizes, cock swelling deep inside me as he comes. For a moment, I wish he wasn't wearing a condom. As reckless as that would be, I've always wanted to know what it would feel like for a man to come inside me. There's something so raw and primal about

the concept of being marked by semen, of feeling it leaking out and knowing that they were there and left something behind.

I don't get to feel that this time, though, but what happens next is even better.

I didn't put any thought into what it might be like after the sex. At the beach, all I could think about was allowing myself to give in to my desires without guilt. Now I'm here, lying between the best men while my sister enjoys her own wedding night, and suddenly I feel less certain.

It's not that I have regrets. I just had the best sex of my life. But how does a girl deal with this part? Are they expecting me to get up and say goodbye? I'm not experienced with casual sex, although, to be honest, this didn't feel very casual. I go to sit up, but Callum grabs me and pulls me toward him until I'm sprawled half over his chest. I feel the bed shift behind me, and then Liam's there, spooning me from behind, his hands running over my ass and hip lazily.

"Damn," Callum says after a few minutes.

"Damn," Liam whispers.

Callum tips my chin until I'm looking right into his beautiful eyes. "You were..."

"...something else," Liam finishes.

I reach behind and take hold of his hand while Callum kisses my lips gently.

"I feel like someone else," I say.

"Who?" they ask at the same time.

“Me,” I say.

We’re silent for a while, but it feels okay. There is not a single moment when they’re not making me feel totally worshiped. It’s only after my heart has slowed and my sweat has cooled that I realize I haven’t felt this happy in years. And when Callum’s fingers dip between my legs again, I know I’m about to get even happier.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

International bestselling author Stephanie Brother writes high heat love stories with a hint of the forbidden. Since 2015, she's been bringing to life handsome, flawed heroes who know how to treat their women. If you enjoy stories involving multiple lovers, including twins, triplets, stepbrothers, and their friends, you're in the right place. When it comes to books and men, Stephanie truly believes it's the more, the merrier.

She spends most of her day typing, drinking coffee, and interacting with readers.

Her books have been translated into German, French, and Spanish, and she has hit the Amazon bestseller list in seven countries.

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