

CASSIE MINT

He'll take her
everywhere.



*Galentine's
Groupies*

ACCESS

all areas

CASSIE MINT

Access All Areas

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One

Resa



The evening sun is shining, the crowd is buzzing, and tonight, I'll see my favorite band of all time. The venue looms above us as we pack close together, chattering and squealing and hugging complete strangers; it's a stadium, sparkly silver and round, like a UFO about to take off. Pink lights stripe the dome walls, and tonight feels unearthly already.

This is real!

The band is *here*. In New Orleans. Oh my god.

At least three fans have already fainted from excitement, then been ushered to the side for bottled water and a medic check. One girl is ugly-crying, raccoon-eyed, with glossy snot on her upper lip, and you know what?

I know how she feels.

Because it's *Soul Obsession*. The band I sang along to every day after middle school, bouncing around our tiny living room. The band I nursed my first crushes on, daydreaming about all the guys one by one with indiscriminate passion. The band whose lyrics I doodled around the edge of my school papers.

This is not a drill.

I mean, I wallpapered my tween bedroom in their posters, and covered my day planner in Soul Obsession stickers. Hell, I met my best friends of all time through fangirling over these guys.

This band is so important to me. Don't care if their songs are cheesy; don't care if it's not *edgy* to sing along, loud and proud, and know every single line. Cut me open, and you'll find Soul Obsession lyrics tattooed on my rib cage.

Eeeee!

"They're here," a girl says next to me, clutching at my elbow. "They're actually here! In our city!" She sounds dazed, and her grip is painfully tight but I don't mind. We beam at each other, perfect strangers with so much in common, before toppling into a hug.

Don't need to know each other's names in this line. Don't need to act cool. We get it. We're all kin.

We're Soul Obsession fans forever, bitches.

"Meg!" someone calls over my head, followed by a whoop in response.

"Holy shit, Clem!"

I'm so jittery my teeth are chattering, never mind the hot, sticky evening. The sound of the crowd presses on my ear drums—and hey, I'm used to the press of people, used to jostling and caterwauling, because I pour drinks in the French Quarter on Friday and Saturday nights, and I've seen exactly how messy humanity can be. But even I find myself fanning my cheeks, edging away from the worst crush of the crowd, and praying that the doors will open soon.

My lanyard scrapes my bare skin under my cropped band t-shirt. It's a VIP pass, arranged by my girl Shelby who's working on the tour—my golden ticket to the backstage experience.

It's a warm, tickly secret. Mine, all mine.

Because I may understand these fans, may feel just as emotional about the band as they do, but if you think I'm gonna show them my backstage pass, you've got another think coming.

Every single fan here would tear me apart to get their hands on this pass. We're talking limb. From. Limb. They'd strangle me with my own lanyard, apologizing between their thrilled screams, and I wouldn't even blame them.

Nah. I'm not risking it.

I'm getting *in*.

Whipping my phone out, I check our group text to see if any of the other girls are here yet, but there's nothing. Signal's winked out for some reason; zero bars. Nothing but old messages to scroll back through, and the slew of crazy gifs and emojis that have been non stop since the video chat that changed everything.

The Soul Obsession reunion tour is a go, Shelby had said, grinning as we fried our microphones with our squeals. *But try not to completely embarrass yourselves meeting them, okay?*

No. Freaking. Promises.

I'll find the girls inside—for the best night of my life.

* * *

Twenty minutes later, I'm flagging, draped over the crowd barrier with the hot metal burning into my bare arms. Sunglasses perch on my nose, protecting me from the worst of the evening sunshine, and I'm slathered top-to-toe in sunscreen. Two empty water bottles are already stuffed in my yellow backpack, drained through the day, and I've done everything right but I'm still thirsty.

So hot.

So *tired*.

When oh when will it finally get dark?

No! This isn't how it's supposed to be. I'm supposed to bounce into that stadium looking and feeling my best, ready to sing along to the soundtrack of my tween years. I'm supposed to look cute as hell, my pixie cut stylishly ruffled, my Soul Obsession t-shirt cut with jagged scissor slashes into a crop top, ready to catch one of the band members' eyes and fall in love at first sight.

Instead, I'm roadkill.

"Bleugh," I groan, rocking my forehead on my folded arms.

Not. Cool.

Are my friends all wilting in the heat somewhere here too?

A throat clears beside my shoulder. "Miss?" Squinting one eye open, I find a pair of black leather brogues on the cracked concrete beneath me. *Big shoes. Manly shoes.*

Oh, god. Is this security? Is he asking me to leave? Am I killing the vibe? I'll die before I miss the show tonight!

Head woozy, I lurch upright, clutching the metal fence for balance. "I'm good! I swear I'm good."

The man stands outside the crush, hands tucked in his pockets. He's an island of disdainful calm; a patch of frost on this hot, humid evening. Unlike the buzzing crowd in our bright colors and pale denim, he's in a gray suit with a white shirt and black tie.

One eyebrow arches. "If you say so."

"I *do* say so."

Though I sure wish my head would stop spinning. For some reason, my brain keeps whispering that this is the hottest man I've ever seen in my life, and that can't be right. He's frowning at me, for starters, and he's dressed like some snobby businessman.

The sun must be getting to me. Need shade, pronto.

"I wonder if you can help me," the man says. Is that a British accent? Wait, it doesn't matter. Pulling a face, I jerk my thumb

over my shoulder.

“The line starts back there, bud.”

And I didn’t stand out here for hours and hours, dehydrating myself, to let some suited hottie jump the line. No, sir.

He doesn’t even look like a Soul Obsession fan! He’s older than most of us, in his mid thirties probably, and he’s all buttoned up. No creases in his shirt; not a single dark hair out of place. He’s got a smoothly shaven jaw, and piercing blue eyes that narrow down at me.

He’s pale. Like a sexy, cranky vampire.

“I don’t need to join the line.” That voice, low and clipped, sends a sparkly feeling rushing through my insides. My toes curl inside my sneakers, and I fight to keep my face politely blank. Who is he? “I need to interview a fan.”

Oooh.

My stiff back eases, and I scratch the side of my neck. Someone shoves up close behind me, and we all shuffle a few inches forward, crushing closer to the doors. “For the paper?”

I guess it could be a cool memory. I could clip out the article—so long as he isn’t too mean in it—and paste it in the Soul Obsession scrapbook I started in middle school. Yeah, why not? It’ll make the girls laugh, anyway.

“No. For a book.” The crowd surges again, nearly knocking me off my feet, and the man looks briefly pained. He blows out a harsh breath, then unhooks the crowd barrier enough to let me squeeze out. “Come on, quickly.”

“But I can’t lose my space in line—”

“We’re going inside. Come on, before they flatten you.”

Blue eyes bore into me, urging me to trust him, and I swear for a split second, everything goes still. The crowd stops pushing; the distant cars stop honking; even the sun eases off and lets a

cool breeze dance over my cheeks. There's nothing else in the world except those icy blue eyes.

No band.

No dehydration headache.

No nothin'.

My heart flutters.

Then—"Oh my god! Is that Jameson? It's Jameson!"

Thousands of bodies press forward, shunting us up the line, all eager for a glimpse of the pop star. And normally I'd be hopping up on my toes to see Jameson too, desperate for a peek, but right now all I feel is a sharp stab of panic as I'm shoved away from the man in a suit.

Eyes wide, mouth open in a silent cry, I stare back at him as I'm carried forward several meters. Something wrenches inside me, like even this much distance is too much; like if I get too far away from him, my heart might tug loose and slump down in my rib cage.

So nuts. That's what too much sun will do to ya.

But the man is here, striding along beside me, keeping pace and cursing under his breath. He unhooks a new section of dusty metal crowd barrier, then reaches into the mob to grip my arm.

His hand is big.

His grip is sure.

And I'm tugged gently from the press of bodies, out into the open air, the barrier shoved shut behind me. Finally, I can breathe again! Laughing brightly, I trip into the man's arms.

"Oh." He rears back, even as his hands clutch me closer. Like he's not sure whether to gather me near or push me away. "Uh—hello."

"Sorry!" Tugging my clothes straight, I step back and offer a shaky smile—and let's pretend that my cheeks are burning

because of the sun. Yeah. That's why. Not because I just lost my mind and snuggled a stranger. "It felt like a hugging moment. So, we're going inside?"

The man shakes his head, but not like he's disagreeing. Like he's dazed, and he needs to jumble his thoughts back together. He's not the only one.

I don't even know this guy's name, and he's suddenly taken the top spot in my brain, even above my all-time favorite band. What on earth?

"Uh. Yes." A quick cough; a straightened tie. "This way, please."

Two

Beckett



When my agent called me with this job writing a book about Soul Obsession, she pitched it hard. Travel the world, she said. Dig deep into the dark side of fame, she said. All expenses paid, no subject off limits, roll around in royalties for the rest of your life, etc, etc.

It was an obvious choice. My life in London has felt so small lately, constricting and airless, with the walls of my flat closing in on all sides. Everything in the capital is gray and damp and joyless. Every day there feels the same. As soon as I got that call, something inside me sung to life, *demanding* I pack up my bags and take off on this tour.

It was a sign, I thought. A good omen. Because something, for god's sake, had to change before I died of boredom at the ripe old age of thirty five.

But then... city after city on those black tour buses. Endless green rooms and sound checks and dusty flight cases. An ocean crossed, and so many late nights and early mornings, and only occasional drama. These guys are older and wiser than their first time with the band, and the gripping story line I hoped for has not yet emerged.

It's the same old boredom, but now with more stamps in my passport.

"This way."

Long strides carry me around the side of the stadium, my shirt sticking to my back in the damp Southern heat. Insects hang in the air in buzzing swarms, unbothered when I swat them away, and the sky is streaked with crimson and purple. The heat-stricken fan I rescued scurries after me, her yellow backpack jostling as she runs to keep up.

I check my stride, slowing down. No need to be a prick about it and make her jog, especially when she looked ready to faint back there. Is she okay?

"I'm Resa," she says, breathless, once we're side by side. "Teresa Castillo."

"Beckett." I smooth my tie. "Liam Beckett."

"Bond, James Bond," Resa jokes, and my mouth twitches against my will. Christ, when was the last time I smiled? The last time I actually laughed, loud and genuine? The last time I noticed the warmth of sunshine on my skin?

I've been numb for far too long.

"We can talk in the green room." Security guards nod at me as we pass, the beefy men dotted at intervals along the outer wall. They're all dressed in black suits, arms folded over their chests, radios crackling at their hips. Lots of shaved heads and tattooed necks. "It won't take long—I just need a fan's perspective."

And to understand why Resa loves Soul Obsession so much; why there are thousands and thousands of adoring fans back there, queuing up for hours in the merciless heat, all dressed in merch.

Have I ever loved something that much? Beyond all reason? I don't think so.

“Will the band be in there?” Resa fizzes with excitement, practically skipping beside me, her hands flapping in the air. “Jax and Jameson and Mason and Crue and—”

My mouth tastes sour. “Possibly. But listen, you can’t bother them, alright? If you do, you’ll be escorted out, interview or no interview.”

“Sure! Of course.” Resa draws a cross over her heart, beaming up at me. Those *dimples*, good lord. This girl’s smile is wide and bright and heart-stoppingly genuine, and the tiny gap between her front teeth makes me want to scrub my face and groan. “I can be normal, I swear.”

A heavy door swings open under my palm, its surface warmed by the sun. “I’ll believe it when I see it.”

Resa’s bright laugh bounces around the corridor inside.

It’s cooler in here, dim and empty. Sounds crackle through hidden speakers: thrumming guitar notes and the whine of microphones. The shiver of cymbals, and the distant thump of equipment dropped onstage. The roadies are setting up, running sound check and getting ready for tonight, and their far-off tinned chatter floats through the speaker system.

They curse a lot, always cracking dirty jokes on stage, and it’s never bothered me before—but now Resa’s listening, I suddenly wish they’d check their language. She’s so *innocent*.

But does it bother her? No. Resa gazes around us, wide-eyed, like this dusty backstage corridor is a garden of wonders. An empty beer bottle slumps against one wall, and there are scuff marks on the lino, yet she floats through it all like an angel touring heaven.

Everything is dark and dingy back here, especially after the blinding sunshine, but Resa is a shock of bright color with her yellow backpack, those pink canvas sneakers, and a sky blue band shirt cut short above a tanned, soft navel. Not to mention her bleached denim skirt and those eyes, those eyes, those eyes.

Brown, with little flecks of gold. Like honeycomb.

“This way.” I’ve got no excuse to touch her, not really, but I take Resa’s elbow anyway, steering her toward the green room door further down the corridor. The buzz of chatter inside gets louder as we approach, and my stomach sinks. The band members *are* there. Is she in love with one of them? I don’t want to see that. “And remember—”

“Be normal. Aye, cap’n.” Resa salutes me with her free arm, making no effort to dislodge my hand on her elbow. Her golden brown skin is butter-soft under my palm, lightly sheened with sweat and sunscreen.

I’d like to lick her all over.

Bloody hell. Where did *that* thought come from? Shaking my head, I lead Resa into the green room.

With crowded tables and vending machines around the walls, it’s not just the band in here: there are off duty crew members, assistants, and visiting friends. A tired photographer sits at a table alone, flicking through the images on her camera, and the tour manager Shelby bustles past, talking a mile a minute into her radio.

“Eep!”

That tiny noise makes me stiffen. If Resa freaks out now, if she rushes one of the band members, if she crosses a line—

But it’s not the Soul Obsession guys Resa slips out of my grip for. It’s *Shelby*, our no-nonsense tour manager—and now they’re hugging and giggling and making enough noise that every single person in the room glances over.

“What?” My voice is clipped, carrying over the clamor. This makes no sense, it does not compute, and it doesn’t help that they’re chattering at a pitch that only dogs can hear. “You two know each other?”

After one final squeeze, Resa turns back to me, her cheeks pink with excitement.

“Yeah, we go way back. Shelby got me my VIP pass, see?” My sun-struck fan tugs a laminated pass on a lanyard from beneath her top, jiggling it in front of her chest. “So I didn’t even need you to get backstage, Mr Bond—although I appreciate the early shade, that’s for sure.”

Resa winks.

My gut flips.

I am so out of my depth with this girl.

Three

Resa



Is there anything more fun in the whole, wide world than getting this suit-wearing grump all flustered and confused?

No, Your Honor, there is not. This is *it*: as fun as fun can be.

When I take Beckett's hand, he jumps like I've given him an electric shock—then clings to my fingers like he'll never let go.

Oh man, oh man.

This is wild.

My heart pounds like crazy as I lead him between the green room tables, over to an empty one by the wall. Someone whistles, but I'm not sure who. And the Soul Obsession guys are *right there*, eating takeout pizzas out of boxes and cracking jokes and scrolling on their phones, all large as life, but... I don't care. Every ounce of my awareness is fixed on the man walking behind me. The man whose hand is wrapped around mine.

Does Beckett feel it too? This pull? All this raw energy crackling between us?

My nerve endings tingle, shivering in sympathy for my overloaded hand. Because the feel of him—the warmth, the strength, the sensation of being tucked up safe in his dry palm—it's too much. Overwhelming.

Stomach in knots, I let go.

“Nice place,” I comment, pulling out a chair, because it’s really not. This green room is as unglamorous as the corridor outside, all bare white walls and cheap metal chairs with dangerously splayed legs, the air scented with hot cheese and men’s deodorant.

Even Beckett’s laugh is clipped. “It’s always like this, in every city. The illusion of glamor and all that. On stage, it’s all bright lights and smoke and screaming fans, with those priceless instruments insured for more than the average building. Everything that you’d imagine. Then you get backstage and immediately step in gum. Almost makes you feel sorry for the band, before you remember they’re all richer than Croesus.”

Croesus? Who’s that? Some tech billionaire, probably.

Beckett settles opposite me, and pulls one of those recording device thingies from his inside suit pocket. After I nod, he switches it on, red light winking as he sets it on the table. “So.”

I smile blandly back, then fold my hands on the tabletop. “So.”

And... this is weird. Everything was so natural between us until now, easy and flowing and *right*, but with that little recorder eavesdropping, I suddenly feel silly. Like a grown woman who should know better than to line up for hours in the heat to see a boy band. Like someone who should’ve outgrown this stuff by now.

Is that how Beckett sees me? A nutty fan, and nothing more?

Is that why he picked me? Oh god, do I seem crazier than all the others out there?

“Teresa Castillo.” My name sounds weird in his British accent—kinda stiff, but in a good way. My ankles cross beneath my chair, one sneaker jiggling with nerves, and the unstable chair slumps an inch lower, legs creeping in opposite directions. “Tell

me about your relationship with this band. Tell me why you love Soul Obsession so much.”

Hoo, boy.

Coming out with the big guns, then.

My eyes flick to where the band members sit together, bickering lazily about their song list—but they’re far enough away that they shouldn’t be able to hear this. Okay, that’s good. It’s less embarrassing.

Um.

“I guess... I mean...”

Shoot, why has my mind gone blank? One hundred percent blank. Every single word in my vocabulary, every smart thought and coherent sentence I’ve ever had, has flown out of my ears. I blink at Beckett, stupid and silent, as he waits for me to speak.

Those piercing blue eyes narrow on me.

“Take your time,” he says. “In fact—”

Beckett’s chair scrapes back, and he strides off to the corner of the room. A vending machine rumbles, rattling against the wall, and then he’s here again with two cold drinks. He raises them both and I pick the cream soda, barely resisting the urge to lunge and snatch it from his hand.

The metal tab clicks, air hissing from the can, and I gulp down the sweet, cold fluid gratefully. How many hours has it been since my last bottle of tepid water? Seems like forever ago, and hey—maybe I can drown myself in cream soda to get out of answering the question. Genius.

Beckett watches me drink for a long moment, then disappears again. This time, he comes back with two bottles of chilled water. “These are both yours.” The bottles thud against the table. “Are you hungry, by the way? That pizza is for everyone.”

I shake my head, still downing my cream soda in one go.

Beckett grunts, unconvinced, but settles back into his chair. And he must be cooking in that suit—it's not exactly cool here, even indoors—but there's still not a single dark hair out of place on his handsome head. Not a bead of sweat on his pale forehead. The man is flawless, unruffled, an island of calm and sophistication in the middle of this grotty, loud green room, and meanwhile I'm...

Well, I'm giving the worst interview ever, and cream soda just dribbled down my chin. Awesome.

"It's..." I wipe my mouth and try again, placing my can down. "The thing is... do you remember puberty?"

Beckett frowns. "All too well, unfortunately."

"Yeah." I laugh, relieved. "Exactly. Okay, so, for me, it goes back to that. To puberty."

The green room is still loud, thank god, buzzing with ten different conversations. Someone gets a drink from the vending machine, the bulky machine grumbling, while someone else plays a dumb prank video on full volume on their phone. My complete humiliation is drowned out.

My voice still drops quieter. And my face is hotter than the concrete outside, but this is easier when I pretend it's just Beckett who can hear me; that there's no sneaky recording device listening. He could change my name for his book, right? Save me from my own humiliating confessions?

I owe him this. He wanted an interview, and I said I could help him.

It helps that Beckett hasn't laughed at me. He's nodding along, interested, one arm outstretched with the fingers tapping lightly on the table.

"Go on."

First, another sip of cream soda. I'm down to the last sloshy inch at the bottom of the can.

“Okay.” I stifle a tiny burp, horrified, and Beckett’s mouth twitches with humor, but he doesn’t say anything. “Oops. Sorry. Okay, so I got my period pretty early. I’d just turned eleven. And, um, I was this gangly, awkward kid with gap teeth and prickly legs because my mom wouldn’t let me shave until I was thirteen. She said it would be bad for my self esteem.”

So was being called Hairy Mary in Gym, but whatever—I like to pretend that I’ve moved on. Forgive and forget and all that.

“Then my hips got wider but my boobs didn’t grow, and the acne started, and I just, I felt like... like a stranger in my own body. Like an alien among the humans. Soul Obsession helped me with that.”

Beckett tilts his head, considering. He hasn’t scoffed once, thank god, not even about my period or acne or hairy legs. And I guess that’s because he’s a man, a mature adult—so yeah, it’s a low bar for him to clear, but I still want to crawl into his lap and never leave. To have him stroke my hair and tell me I’m not repulsive. I’m normal.

“Because of the lyrics?” he asks. “Some fans have said that Soul Obsession songs are empowering. *Girl, You Shine*, for example.”

“No. I mean—they are empowering, sure, but that’s not why they helped. For me, it was because I suddenly had something in common with the other girls. An easy way to make friends. We were all misfits in our own way, but we had this shared love.”

And gosh, the relief of that! It makes me dizzy now to remember it.

“We could all sing along together, read fan fiction, take online quizzes about which Soul Obsession guy would be our soulmate.”

A muscle flexes in Beckett’s jaw, but he nods encouragingly. “And you still love these men? You still have that... passion? You’re here for their reunion tour after all, with a VIP pass.”

It's one of those moments where it feels like there's another question hidden beneath his words. Shifting in my chair, I wet my lips. Need to say this right.

"I still love the *band*. Their music will always be important to me, just like the friends I made through fan groups. And sure, I daydreamed once or twice about coming here tonight and meeting the guys, and like, falling in love—"

Beckett clears his throat, drawing his hand back across the table. Panicked, I snatch for it, tangling our fingers together before I even know what I'm doing.

"No, wait! That was before." My pulse thuds in my wrists, but Beckett's not pulling away. He lets me cling to his hand, one eyebrow raised. "That was before, okay? And now I'm here in this green room, only a few tables away, and I don't feel anything—not for the band members, anyway. Those were just silly daydreams... but I still love Soul Obsession with all my heart. Does that make sense?"

One juddering heartbeat.

Then two.

Three.

Until finally, at long last, a blunt thumb traces gently over my knuckle. "Not for the band members," Beckett repeats slowly.

A red-hot blush crawls up my throat. Busted.

But he's holding my hand again. Playing with my fingers, studying them like they're fascinating, and this can't be how normal interviews go. I can't be alone in feeling this connection. Right?

It's just—it's too strong, too overwhelming, and surely Beckett must feel this too. Or else why is he pressing our thumbs together like that, measuring his big, pale one against mine? You don't do that with strangers!

“Doors open soon.” Beckett flicks off his recorder with his spare hand and slides it back into his pocket, and his tone is casual. Way too casual. “Then it’s the warm up act. Do you want to see it? Or would you like a backstage tour?”

Uh, *duh*.

“Tour,” I say, so quickly that Beckett’s frosty demeanor finally cracks. He smiles, warm and fleeting, his eyes crinkling at the corners, and I’d think I hallucinated it if it weren’t for the squirmy evidence in my belly.

This man!

Oh my god.

I’m in so much trouble.

Four

Beckett



This is a terrible idea. It's the sort of thing I'd expect from these pop stars, not myself—but here I am, towing a giggling Resa behind me through the curving stadium corridors. If it were Crue or Mason sneaking a strange girl backstage, I'd be taking notes for the book, philosophizing about how fame makes men do stupid things.

Here I am instead, at the center of the drama, losing my mind over this bright, happy fan girl. I don't even recognize myself.

"This is the home team's locker room." I push the door open, standing back in the corridor. This stadium hosts a lot of football games, and Resa ducks her head through the doorway before reeling back, gasping. Her eyes are watering, and she clutches at her throat.

"Ew, Beckett! It smells like feet!"

Yes, this isn't the most romantic stop on our tour. But I couldn't resist, and it's all worth it when Resa punches my arm then drags me away, laughing. Our voices bounce around us as we chat, but the crowds are inside the venue now, their cheers bleeding through the walls, and there's no risk of us disturbing anyone.

We're on our own planet. Just the two of us, exploring this alien terrain.

When the warm up act strikes their first chord, the vibrations tickle through my shoes.

"That's a lot of cases," Resa says when I lead her to the loading bay: a cavernous room with a whole wall missing, the equipment trucks standing empty beyond. The silver flight cases are stacked in huge clumps around us, five or six deep, while three roadies sit out on the loading dock and smoke together.

"Yes, but a tour this huge needs a lot of equipment. The label spared no expense."

It's dark outside finally, with a star-speckled navy sky, and every time one of the roadies inhales, their cigarette lights up cherry-red in the darkness. The sounds of the warm-up gig are louder out here.

The air is warm and damp, and moths flutter around the loading bay floodlights high above, headbutting the glass bulbs. Nothing for the crew to do out here except wait until the show's over.

"Huh." Rena turns slowly on the spot, soaking it all in like she really is a tourist on vacation, seeing all the sights. Trying to commit it to memory before she goes back to her everyday life.

Meanwhile, I'm trying to commit *her* to memory—every last detail. Her short, ruffled brown hair. The way her lips part as she gazes up at the stars. Those round cheeks that get even rounder when she smiles.

All of it.

All of *her*.

What the hell will I do once Resa's gone? Go back to feeling dead inside? Go back to numbness, to boredom, to burying myself in my work?

“Come on.” Can’t stop touching her. Can’t stop holding her hand. Now that I’ve felt it, now that I’ve tasted having her close, I don’t want things any other way. If I could tie us together without seeming completely unhinged, I’d do it in a heartbeat. “There’s more to see.”

Like dressing rooms scattered with abandoned jackets, half-drunk water bottles, and open packets of M&Ms. I watch Resa out of the corner of my eye, but she doesn’t seem overly fascinated by the band members’ stuff, and she never once lets go of my hand. When I pull her away, she comes happily along.

We visit the merch stands next, set up ready near the exits, the tables stacked high with special ten-year reunion t-shirts. I let go of Resa briefly, but only to slide some money beneath the locked cash box and fish out a t-shirt in her size. She hugs it to her chest and gazes up at me like I’m her knight in shining armor.

Fuck.

“Make sure you cut this one in half too,” I tell her. Resa giggles as she strokes the lilac fabric, then tucks the t-shirt lovingly in her backpack.

This whole night is surreal.

Then there’s the lighting booth, at the very top of the stadium—as high as we can humanly climb. My thighs burn by the time we reach the top of the stairs, and Resa’s breathing hard, but she shoots me a happy grin when I check on her. The gig is still muffled, but seeping through the thick walls.

“Here.” I tug Resa to the lighting booth door. It’s not locked, and when I shoulder it open, the follow-spot operators glance over their shoulders and nod at us before turning back to the show.

There are five of them, all dressed in black with headsets, each balancing a huge light on their shoulder and aiming it at the stage. The music from the stage is piped in here too, made tinny by the ancient speakers.

The spots are used to me crashing their glass-fronted booth. I've watched this gig from every angle, tried a bunch of locations, always searching for a new insight. For the spark of inspiration that will help me write my book.

Now that spark elbows me in the ribs. "We're so high up," Resa hisses. Yeah, from all the way up in this booth, the stage looks kinda small down there. The musicians pace around, so energetic, keyed up by the mania of the crowd.

Just wait until Soul Obsession comes onstage. The fans will scream so loud that birds take flight miles away.

And Resa's beaming down at the stage, bouncing on her toes as she grips my hand... but that excitement is not for *me*, is it? It's for this backstage tour, and tonight's show. The reminder tightens my throat, and I swallow hard.

Resa's excited about this sneak peek, excited about Soul Obsession, but let's be honest: if we had first passed each other in a coffee shop this morning, she probably wouldn't have glanced my way. We might never have spoken.

"Let's go." My temples throb as I tow Resa out of the lighting booth.

This is temporary. I can't forget that.

* * *

"This is so cool, Beckett. So, so cool. Thank you so much for doing this!"

Resa's happy chatter echoes in my ears as I lead her back down the stairs, down into the belly of the building. There isn't much time left. Pretty soon, Soul Obsession will start their set, and Resa won't want to miss a single second of it. Our time is nearly up.

"Do you know which door you're supposed to go in by?"

My voice sounds dull to my own ears. Robotic. Our feet clatter against the steps.

But I can do this—I can walk Resa to wherever she’s supposed to go, wave goodbye, and then move on with my life. I can, damn it.

A few stolen hours with this girl can’t ruin my life. The universe wouldn’t be so cruel, surely.

“Um.” Pausing in the stairwell, Resa fumbles her phone out of her back pocket and taps at the screen. It lights up, the rectangle of light casting a pale glow over her beautiful face. “Door 5E. Wherever that is.”

Will Resa ever think about me after tonight? Does the idea of us parting gut her too?

God, what if I’m the only one feeling this? What if I’m crazy and I don’t even realize it? There are true crime podcasts about men like me! Okay, so I’ll walk Resa to door 5E and then I’ll let her go like a sane person. Fine.

My insides feel like they’ve been chafed with sandpaper. Raw and bleeding. But I lead Resa down the stairwell, then to the door for the right corridor.

“Wait.” A small hand snags my sleeve, tugging me back. I go still as a statue, waiting in the empty stairwell for whatever Resa wants to say. My brain is broken, already destroyed by the prospect of her leaving. There’s nothing but static between my ears.

Resa bites her bottom lip, gazing up at me as the warm up act’s power ballad bleeds through the walls. Then she puffs out a breath, rocks up onto her toes, and—and *kisses* me.

Bloody hell.

My hands dart up, cupping her cheeks. My lips move of their own accord, kissing Resa back. Kissing her *hard*.

And when I tilt her head, coaxing her lips to part, Resa sighs against my mouth and slides our tongues together. She’s melting against me, her soft body sealed against my front.

My heart slams against my rib cage, desperately trying to reach her.

“Beckett,” she murmurs, fingers scratching the short hairs on my neck, and every cell in my body responds to my name in her voice. I’m harder than granite, my muscles tense on my bones, while molten blood pumps in my ears.

“Beckett,” Resa says again. Jesus. She’s bending one leg, knee rubbing at my thigh; crowding me back against the wall, like she wants to climb me right here—like she’d mount me right in this echoing stairwell.

Works for me. Holy shit, does that work for me.

“Angel.” My greedy hands roam over her arms, her bare waist, her juicy wide hips—squeezing and stroking as they go. And I’ll never get enough of this, never tire of touching this girl, because Resa is color and laughter and sunshine and I’ve been bored and numb for so long, living in gray scale.

She’s the antidote. She’s what I’ve been missing.

My teeth scrape her throat. Resa tips her head back and moans—then fumbles with my tie, loosening the noose around my throat. “Should we—?”

A door bangs open a few floors above us, the noise loud and sudden.

We spring apart as steps thud down the stairs. The roadie grins when he rounds the stairwell and we come into view, both flushed and breathing hard. His steps slow down.

“Well, well, well.” Dark eyes flick between us, teasing. “What do we have here?”

Five

Resa



I'm hardly the first girl to kiss a man backstage at a gig, but tell my bright-red cheeks that. They don't cool down for a single second—not while Beckett chats with the roadie, not while he walks me silently to door 5E, and not even ten minutes later when I'm shoulder-to-shoulder with my fellow fans, staring dry-eyed at the lit-up stage.

The first act is wrapping up, soaking up their last few minutes of borrowed glory, and the fans are game, whooping and cheering along. It's hot as hell in this crush of bodies, and I keep getting elbows in my back, feet stepping on mine, and other girls' long hairs in my mouth.

Bleugh.

And—this isn't me. This sinking stone in my belly; this ache in my chest; this *miser*y seeping out of my pores. It feels all wrong.

Because I'm a happy person, damn it! Resa Castillo is built for pleasure and gratitude, okay—and yet here I am, sour as a crab apple pie, even as my favorite band of all time rushes on stage to a tidal wave of screams.

The Soul Obsession guys are more than a decade older than when I saw them live as a teenager, singing along with my

friends until we were hoarse. But they look *good* out there tonight: strong and lithe, a little broader, a little harsher, falling into their old rhythm together as easily as breathing.

The opening chords fill the arena, and the tiny hairs on my arms stand on end.

“Oh my god,” the girl next to me sobs, tears streaking her cheeks. Still no sign of my besties, and no signal on my phone to hunt them down. “Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god. It’s really them.”

Yeah. It is.

The Soul Obsession guys are here, breathing the same oxygen as us in this stadium, sweat already slicking their skin as their music vibrates the air. And I should be floating up to the clouds, should be stamping and screaming myself hoarse with the other fans, but all I can think about is Beckett.

Liam Beckett. My sexy, suit-wearing grump.

What’s he doing right now? Is he watching the show somewhere?

Is he thinking about me too? That kiss! Oh gosh, that kiss.

My insides are all tangled up like linguine, and my lips are still tingling. The ghost of Beckett sighs against my cheek. And—suddenly I can’t stand another second in this crowd, under these lights, in this *heat*, so I turn and fight my way through the wall of limbs.

The other fans press back, but I grit my teeth and throw up my elbows, thrashing toward the nearest door. I’m nice but I’m not *that* nice, not when there’s somewhere I really need to be.

Because Beckett and I aren’t done with each other yet. Alright? *I’m* not done.

But why didn’t he ask for my number? Was he secretly eager to get rid of me all along?

Face scrunched with the effort of keeping those questions at bay, I fight my way to the exit. The corridor outside is empty and still. My ears ring as my breath saws in and out of my lungs. That crowd was so intense, and now my thighs are trembling like jelly, barely holding me up. Clearing my throat, I finger comb my pixie and tug my crop top straight.

Right, let's do this.

Backpack: check.

All limbs accounted for: check.

And a can-do attitude? You betcha.

With Soul Obsession's top hits rattling through the speakers, I march to the stairwell, back the way we came. Every time I round a corner or push through a set of doors, a fresh wave of disappointment hits when Beckett's not there.

The corridor is empty. The stairwell is too.

Shoot. Where did he go? What if I can't find him again? My heart throbs in my chest, dragging my tired legs forward. Need to keep looking. *Need* to see Beckett again, or else... I can't even think it.

But this stadium is a rabbit warren, all the corridors exactly the same white and gray, and I definitely walk past the same scuff mark twice in the next ten minutes.

On and on, the band plays, the canned sound floating down from the speakers while the bass thrums through the floor.

On and on, I wander.

And with every step, my heart sinks a little further.

For a twenty-two year old, I feel like the creakiest, most exhausted old crone. Should have taken Beckett up on his offer of pizza earlier, shored up my blood sugar or whatever, but in my defense, I didn't plan on walking a marathon.

Band posters and football fixtures drift past on the walls. An ad for cheeseburgers; a season ticket promo. My sneakers drag

along the floor, because I'm too tired now to raise my feet properly in this endless labyrinth. The toes pinch, the heels slip, and there's that telltale stinging heat that says I'm getting blisters.

I stop and check my phone.

Zero bars. Sigh.

What the hell? I pick a door at random and shove it open, stumbling through—and freeze when I recognize the view.

The green room is emptier than earlier, with only a few folks hunched over the tables. A group of roadies are playing poker, shooting each other faux-evil eyes, and two older women in business suits drink coffee together, speaking in hushed tones. The vending machines hum against the walls, rattling their wares together.

But there's only one thing I really see: a pair of pale blue eyes over at our table, narrowing on me.

“Resa?” Beckett shoves to his feet. “Are you alright?”

* * *

“I just—I had to see you again. I wasn't done.”

“I know.” The evening breeze ruffles Beckett's hair as he carries me across the parking lot out back. Roadies whoop and whistle at us over on the loading bay, but it's like Beckett doesn't even hear them. He's too busy scowling at me, all stiff with concern. “But your feet, Resa.”

Yeah, somehow, after a full day tromping around this city and this labyrinth of a stadium, my old, faithful sneakers have turned on me. The pink canvas is stained reddish-brown with patches of blood, and Beckett has point blank refused to let me walk another step.

“It was weird. I swear, I got so lost, it was like I was walking in there for *hours*. Like I fell into a pocket dimension.”

Beckett grunts, his strong arms all protective around my body. I'm no featherweight, not with these hips and thighs, but my man's packing a surprising amount of toned muscle under that suit. He doesn't seem strained at all by my weight.

Noted.

"Where are you carrying me?"

Should probably ask that *before* I let a strange man carry me off into the darkness, but hey. This is Beckett. The rules don't apply.

He could carry me anywhere and I'd go, heart singing in my chest. He could take me on a tour of the dumpsters, and I'd love every second nestled against his strong chest.

"Tour bus. One of the crew ones."

A warm wind brushes over my throat and bare belly.

"Oh, cool. Is that where you live right now?"

"Yes. Well—some cities, we stay in hotels. But yes."

"Do you have your own private bedroom on the bus?"

Eyes flick down to me, then away. "Yes. But that's not why I'm..."

"No kidding." Can't resist tugging Beckett's earlobe. "You had me at your mercy earlier, all eager and willing, and you dropped me off at door 5E without even a smooch goodbye."

A troubled frown creases his forehead. "That's not quite how I remember tonight's events."

His earlobe is soft and squishy. Rolling it between my finger and thumb, I marvel at how *intimate* this is. How I didn't even know this man a few hours ago, and now I'm carried in his arms across a dark parking lot, poking and prodding at his body like I have an all-access pass, hoping against hope that he'll take advantage of me tonight. That he won't be a *perfect* gentleman.

"Sorry, mister, but the tape doesn't lie."

“What tape?” An eye roll, then I’m jostled against Beckett’s chest—like he wants me closer, even when I’m already in his arms. “That is not what happened, Resa.”

“So you say.”

“So I do.”

“And yet *I* came looking for *you*. Are you sure you even want to hang out with me more? Or are you humoring me?” Flipping Beckett’s shirt collar up and down, I stare at his chin while I wait for an answer.

Because if this is all in my head, if I’ve magicked up some crazy connection between us out of sheer wishful thinking, I’m going to leap out of his arms and sprint home right now, bloodied feet or no.

Beckett heaves out a sigh.

My insides quiver as I wait.

Then: “I already got your phone number from Shelby,” the writer confesses quietly. His voice is taut with consternation. “Seems I couldn’t let you go either.”

Six

Beckett



Resa's questions echo in my head as I carry her onto the tour bus, the door hissing shut behind us. The doubt in her sweet voice back there sent arrows through my gut, and I hate that she wouldn't meet my eye. Like she was bracing for rejection, not sure if I want her around.

But what else could I do earlier except let her go?

Grab the bubbly fan girl I chose for an interview and steal her away? Abduct her onto this glossy black tour bus and keep her with me forever? Slide a ring onto her finger before dawn?

That's 911 territory, and I'm no fantasist.

"It looks even bigger on the inside," Resa murmurs, craning her neck to peer around us at the bus. Everything is lit by soft lights dotted overhead. We pass the kitchen area with its break-out table, bolted to the floor and surrounded by bench seats; the closed doors of other crew members' bedrooms; a shower room that smells like the battling scents of three different shampoos.

The cramped hallway is carpeted and silent, and Resa's sneakers scuff gently against the wall as I carry her through. The shower drips.

"Doesn't feel all that big when you live in it for weeks. More like a glorified camper."

But I don't really mind. I wanted an adventure, and this tour has given me one—and now it's brought me to Resa.

Christ. Resa.

How will I ever let her go? Every time her breath mists against my neck, my heart thumps a little faster. My cock is harder than sin with her body this close to mine, and now we're alone on this dimly lit tour bus.

...Alone.

For hours, probably.

Focus, you prick.

"There's a first aid kit," I say as I deposit her on my bed in the last room on the bus, determined not to notice how ruffled and flushed Resa looks already—like we've been rolling around together in those sheets. "Stay here. I'll be right back."

"Oh, sure." She flops back, empty bottles crunching in that backpack beneath her, and starfishes on my double bed. "Wake me up if I fall asleep."

So much trust. So much it makes me dizzy.

Over in the silent kitchen, I scrub my face and sigh. The tiredness of several weeks on the road was already making my days woozy, but now with Resa here, everything feels dreamlike and off-kilter. What is real? What does she want? What can we do that she won't regret?

Tugging the first aid kit off its shelf, I walk back to my own room like a man walking to the gallows.

Need to trust myself, but I'm hanging by a thread.

"Resa." Her eyes flick open—she's not sleeping, then. Just lying flat on my bed, soft breaths stirring the air, her face slack with fatigue. I'm not the only one having a long, weird day. "I'm going to take your shoes off, okay?"

"Mm."

Her right foot lifts up in offering. Placing the first aid kit on the bed, I kneel on the floor and tease her laces loose. The sneaker comes off easily, but Resa tenses up with a hiss when her sock sticks to her new blisters.

“Sorry.” A whole sad, bloodied pile of socks and shoes grows next to my knee as I strip her left foot too. Bare toes wriggle in the air, and I can’t resist catching her ankles in my hands. Can’t resist rubbing those ankle bones with the pads of my thumbs, feeling the delicate structure of her. The architecture beneath her satin skin.

Resa makes a small sound in the back of her throat. Her bare ankles are so warm and delicate under my hands.

“I’m going to clean and bandage your feet. It might sting a bit.”

“Okay.”

Simple as that: *okay*. I’m going to cause her pain, and that’s okay. I’ve carried her to my bed and that’s okay. I’m asking her to trust me, and it’s A-okay.

Frustration chokes me, even as I spread the first aid supplies out on the mattress in easy reach: antiseptic wipes, numbing cream, and a selection of different-sized band aids.

Resa shouldn’t trust so easily. What if I were a bad man?

Hell, what if I *am* a bad man? What if having her here, exactly where I want her, soothing the emptiness in my chest... breaks something inside me? What if I never let her leave after all?

“Have you told anyone you’re here?” I ask mildly.

Resa hums and shakes her head, then wriggles her backpack off. She digs for her phone, the screen lighting up so it reflects two rectangles in her eyes, and taps out a message.

“I’ve got no signal right now,” she says. Trust, too much trust. “But I’ve told the girls where I am. It’ll send in the morning. No one will worry about me in the meantime, Beckett, it’s fine.”

That is *not* fine. That is the opposite of fine.

Resa's breath hitches when I dab at the first blister with an antiseptic wipe—and I'm going as gently as I can, but I can't help the sting.

"Distract me," Resa whispers when I move onto the second. Her poor feet are battered and raw, and this discomfort will last for a while yet, so if I can help with that, I will. "Tell me a secret."

My mouth twitches as I tease open another band-aid. "A secret? I don't have many of those."

It sounds like a line, but I really don't. Because sure, I have things I don't tell people, but it's not because they're a capital S-Secret. It's because I'm not that close to anyone back in London. Or anywhere, for that matter.

But for Resa, I'll make the effort. "Help me out here. What would you like to know?"

Propping up on her elbows, she bites her lip and stares down at me over the hills and valleys of her perfect body. "Um—okay. Did you have any pets growing up?"

A smile bursts over my face, even as I watch my hands working. "Ah, yes. Top secret stuff."

"Says the man dodging the question."

Ha. Fine.

"We had cats in my house." Another packet tears open. "My parents were away a lot, and they didn't want the responsibility of a dog. They didn't particularly want the responsibility of a child, either."

That last bit slips out, unguarded, and I stiffen once I hear my own words—but Resa simply nods, encouraging me to go on. There's no pity in her eyes—just compassion and curiosity.

"There was this one cat," I say, testing her interest. She doesn't *seem* bored. "My favorite one. A silver tabby. He was bad-tempered and moth-eaten and enormous, and he wouldn't sit on

any laps except mine. He lived to be twenty years old, and for the last few of them he was half-bald.”

“Name?”

“Rustbucket.”

Resa bursts out laughing, the sound echoing around the empty bus. And somehow I’m grinning, shifting on my aching knees as I grab another antiseptic wipe; somehow talking about this personal stuff is easier than it’s ever been before.

“I never had any pets.” Resa clicks her tongue. “Our house was already so loud and crowded, and there was never any room for animals. It used to feel so unfair, like I was missing out on a furry best friend, but these days I’m glad I never got one. There’s nothing tying me to one place, you know? I can take off on a whim. Go and travel the world, maybe.” She eyes me. “Run away with a handsome writer.”

My stomach drops. “Resa...”

She sighs and flops back on to the bed, where I can’t see her face properly. “Joking, obviously. That would be insane.”

“It would.”

Insane like winning the lottery.

Insane like falling in love in one night.

And my throat is so tight, I need to cough quietly before I can speak again. “Your feet are done.”

“Oh!” Just like that, Resa lurches upright again, leaning over to see my handiwork. Her bandaged toes wriggle, and her face is suddenly so close to mine. It’s dim in this room, lit only by my bedside lamp, and the golden glow makes her cheeks look soft.

So soft.

My hand moves of its own accord, cupping her face. Softness confirmed.

Resa breathes faster, reaching forward to grab my tie. She wets her lips, giving them a damp sheen.

We've already kissed once. What's the harm? It's only my heart that will never recover; only the threat of madness once she leaves. No big deal.

"Beckett." Resa's knuckles are bleached pale where she grips my tie, squeezing it like a lifeline. "You carried me to your bedroom. You've done your manly savior bit. Are you gonna ravish me or not?"

And I'm a cool, collected man—usually. A paragon of restraint.

But when Resa stares at me, beseeching with those big, doe eyes... fuck it. An archangel couldn't resist this girl.

Lunging forward, a beast roaring in my chest, I capture her mouth with mine.

Seven

Resa



Thank. God.

It feels like years since I kissed this man, though in reality it's probably less than an hour. He's eaten a breath mint since then, the cool flavor carried on his tongue, but otherwise it's all so perfectly familiar.

Becket tilts my head and kisses me hard, kisses me *deep*, sliding his tongue past my lips—plundering my mouth like a sexy pirate rather than a man in a suit. And he's so warm and hard, muscles shifting beneath his shirt. When I trace beneath his jaw, his racing pulse taps against my fingertips.

The bed creaks beneath us. Beckett's still kneeling, but even from the floor, he looms over me. One of his hands presses into the mattress for balance, balled into a fist, while the other strokes over my waist, my shoulder, my neck.

"Resa." He kisses me so hard, my jaw cracks. I freaking love it. "Angel."

My fingers tremble as they pluck at his shirt buttons. And how is Beckett still in a suit, how is he wearing all these *layers* on this hot metal bus that's been cooking in the New Orleans heat all day? Madness.

Though he's not sweaty. Not ruffled at all—or at least, he wasn't until thirty seconds ago. But now that we're kissing again, now that I'm tugging him up onto the bed, scrambling back on the mattress as he crawls on top of me, there's a telltale flush on Beckett's vampire-pale cheeks. His dark hair is ruffled.

"We don't have to do anything." Even as he mutters those words, Beckett buries his face in my throat, licking and nipping at the skin. And the bed rocks beneath us as we shift around, my backpack sliding to the floor with a clatter, but I don't care.

The bus is empty. The door is closed.

And we may never get this chance ever again.

No. Can't let myself think about that. Can't think about morning coming, and this bus driving off to another city, leaving me behind in the parking lot in yesterday's clothes. Every time my brain goes there, my chest caves in on itself and tears burn my eyes.

"Get this jacket off." I shove at his lapels, bunching the fabric around his shoulders. "Get it off."

One night stand vibes. I can do this.

I can pretend one night with Beckett won't crush me.

He loses the jacket and tie, and leans back over me, shirt half-buttoned. That sliver of his pale, toned chest—that's my handiwork. Want to lick him, so I do.

"Ngh." Beckett grunts, cupping the back of my head as I kiss and nibble at his chest, his thumb stroking through my short hair. "Resa, I—how far do you want to take this?"

All the way, baby. To the moon and back.

My lips curve against his chest. "As far as you'll let me."

Quietly, barely on the edge of hearing, Beckett lets out a heartfelt: "*Fuck.*"

When he rolls off me, all my air seizes in my lungs—but it's okay. He's stripping his shirt, tugging his belt open, kicking off

his shoes. Undressing with jerky motions, one eyebrow raised at me as if to say, “Well?”

And I could lie here in a puddle, could wait for Beckett to come back and undress me himself, but I’m too greedy for skin-to-skin contact for that. Too afraid that he might change his mind at any moment.

My top whispers against my skin as I tug it off, and Beckett makes a growly sound. My bra and skirt follow suit, all sailing through the air to smack against the thin bus wall.

Beckett stares at me, chest heaving.

The curtains are open a tiny slit, stars winking in the night sky—and my legs part so naturally as Beckett crawls back up my body, settling his hips between my thighs. We’re both still in our underwear, two layers of fabric between us, and mentally, I’m cursing the shyness that held me back from stripping all the way.

If I were braver, Beckett could be pushing inside me right now. Holding my thighs apart and sinking deep. He could—

“These tits.” Beckett shakes his head, palming my left boob in his hand, the sudden heat and friction all tickly against my nipple. I squirm, but he doesn’t seem to mind that they’re so small. He’s freaking *thrilled* with me. “Your fucking body, Resa. Your eyes. All of you.”

Looping my arms around his neck, I kiss his chin. “Back atcha.”

Because he’s so *much*. So big and lithe and toned, somehow even more so out of his clothes, with that deep voice tingling through my insides and his hot breath puffing against my cheek. The way Beckett cups me, palms me, testing how I feel... it’s so *possessive*. Like I’m his private plaything.

I love it.

And I *am*. I am his.

More than he even realizes.

“You’re soaked.” When his fingers delve beneath my panties, Beckett’s voice turns gruff with approval. My handsome writer touches my body like he owns it, cataloging the effects he has on me: my flushed cheeks, my ragged breaths, how slick I get after the merest kiss. He’s pleased by what he finds. “You need this, don’t you, sweet girl? You’re desperate for it.”

Hips lifting to chase his touch, I nod so fast my teeth clack together. “Uh-huh. I need it, Beckett. *Please.*”

Me? Too proud to beg?

Nope! No way.

Besides, he likes it. Beckett’s pupils are blown wide, eating up the ring of icy blue, and now he’s like some dark-eyed, British-voiced demon looming over me. Coasting his fingertips through my folds; brushing my clit and smirking when I whine.

A car door slams nearby in the parking lot, and the muffled sound of the Soul Obsession gig seeps through the bus window. Should probably care about skipping the show I declared I’d rather die than miss, but things have changed. There’s no place on Earth I’d rather be right now.

It’s hot in here, stifling hot, and when I lick my lips, I taste my own salty sweat.

“Beckett,” I plead.

Eyes narrowed, he pushes two fingers inside me. *Stretching* me.

“Ow.” My smile is lopsided, but Beckett pauses, two thick fingers wedged in me past the second knuckle. My channel twitches around the intrusion, muscles straining to adjust, but the sting is already fading. My hips roll up, impatient. “Hey, come on. Keep going.”

“Keep... *Resa.* That hurt you. Is this—are you—?”

The writer stares down at me, muffled panic flickering behind his eyes. When he reads the answer splashed all over my

face, Beckett's eyes slam shut, and his pained groan echoes around the room. His fingers curl reflexively, stroking my inner walls, and it's so tickly and good.

"Hey," I say. "Stop grumping." There's a freckle right on his collarbone, and when I thump him on the shoulder, my pathetic hit makes a dull sound. "Just because it's my first time doesn't mean I'll be terrible at it."

Beckett levels me a glare. "That is clearly *not* what I'm worried about. Give me some credit, please."

"No." I shake my head, heart hammering. "I won't if you won't. You're acting like I'm not able to make my own decisions. Like you're taking advantage of me."

His eyebrows shoot up. "I *am* taking advantage—"

"No, you're not, you giant jerk! I'm a grown woman, and I know what I want, and I want *you*, Liam Beckett. Deal with it." My speech would sound better if my voice didn't crack, but that's life. Besides, it's been a long, weird day, and I'm still thirsty in *all* the ways, and even as we talk about this, my hips roll, trying to ride his hand. "Would you rather I go back to my normal life tomorrow and find another man to pop my cherry? Would that make you happier?"

I already know it wouldn't—and the furious clench of Beckett's jaw says I'm right. Well, if he doesn't want anybody else to have me, then he can't freak out about being my first. It's basic logic.

So nyerr.

"I'm older than you," Beckett points out, but his fingers are moving again, pumping slowly in and out of my body. They're slick and sheened in the lamplight, and I'm getting wetter by the minute, my nerve endings crackling under his touch. The waistband of my panties digs into his wrist. "By at least a decade. And I'm jaded and tired and my bones creak in the mornings."

"Sounds like you deserve a treat."

Beckett puffs out a pained laugh and crooks his fingers again, stroking the spot inside me which makes my bandaged toes curl. “That’s not how the world works, Angel.”

“Well, it could be. For us.”

I could be the sunshine behind his clouds; the warm hug after a long day. The slick, needy girl in his bed, begging for satisfaction. Would that be so wrong?

“I don’t like Soul Obsession,” he warns, like this might be the final straw. “I mean—I don’t dislike them. But they’re not my favorite. Boy bands aren’t my thing.”

I cup his cheek. “We’ll work through this. Together.”

And we’re teasing each other now, dragging out the conversation, because our bodies have already decided. He’s thrusting into me with two fingers, steady and sure, and my hips are rolling, riding his touch. We’re both breathing hard, both flushed, both staring like the other is the center of our world.

Want more. Want his cock splitting me open, reaching parts of me that have never been reached—and I tell him so, whining as Beckett sucks on my throat, so restless and eager I can barely breathe.

“Soon. You’ll come for me first—come on my hand. Soak my fingers. Show me, Angel.” Beckett’s teeth scrape my neck, and the cramped room spins.

Eight

Beckett



Resa Castillo brought to an orgasm by my hand is a sight to behold. It's the eighth wonder of the world—a modern day miracle. A gift that no mortal man could deserve. And I've barely recovered from the sight, barely ripped off those panties and shoved down my own boxers, before I'm pushing inside her fully and losing my goddamn mind all over again.

Can't think.

Can't speak.

Can't go as gently as I should.

Because pure unadulterated *need* crackles down my spine, my nerve endings throwing off sparks like a struck flint. Can't do anything except thrust deep, rocking inside her, groaning at the hot, wet squeeze of her body around mine.

"Resa." My voice is thick; my tongue is clumsy. I pet her short hair, the roots damp with sweat. "Angel. Fuck. You okay? Does this hurt?"

"It's *so* okay." Fingernails rake a fiery path down my back, and Resa's hips rise to meet mine, grinding me deep. She's a force of nature, undulating beneath me. "So much better than okay. Oh my god. Oh, wow. This is sex. Okay, I get it now."

Her neck tastes salty, and smells faintly of sunscreen. “Get what?”

“Why everyone loses their minds over this.”

Tell me about it. Common sense and my last shred of self preservation are a distant, fuzzy memory right now.

“Say you love me,” Resa whispers as my cock throbs inside her. Sheets tangle around our feet, rucked up by us rolling around, and the pleasure of moving inside her is so sharp, it’s edging into pain. “Just pretend for a minute.”

Pretend?

My throat is tight. “I love you.”

And insane as it is, I don’t need to pretend.

My body knows hers. It *recognizes* hers, just like something inside me clicked into place the first time this bubbly fan girl met my eyes. Of course I love her. Resa is my person.

But she flushes even brighter at my words, her lips curving in a dreamy smile. Like she doesn’t even realize I’m not kidding—like she truly doesn’t know. And that kills me... but maybe it’s for the best.

After all, it’s not like I can ask Resa to uproot her whole life and follow me on this tour. Not like I can offer her much of anything right now except a spot on this already crowded tour bus.

“You’re so beautiful.” I nip her chin. “So perfect, Resa. Look at how well you’re taking my cock.”

She nods, expression dazed as she claws at my back. “Uh-huh. *Oh*. Give it to me, Beckett. Please.”

My hand jams between us to rub at her clit. My jaw is clenched so hard my teeth ache.

I *will* get her there. I will feel her tighten on my cock if it’s the last bloody thing I do.

“Oh.” Resa’s eyes flutter closed. “Oh, that’s...”

Her channel clamps down on me without warning, gripping harder than a vise. The heat in this small bedroom roars to a new furnace level. And every ripple of sensation, every shudder that rocks her small, soft frame, is the best goddamn thing I’ve ever felt, bar none.

She’s a miracle.

Resa comes with a throaty gasp.

The stars glitter through the slit in the curtains, watching my world turn upside down.

It takes every ounce of my remaining will power, but I pull out as soon as Resa is done, her body collapsing in a boneless puddle. Can’t be even more reckless than I’ve already been—can’t get Resa in trouble. White ropes of come streak her perfect, bare belly, and a knife of pleasure stabs into my gut and *twists*.

“Ew,” Resa murmurs, but she’s grinning up at me, tracing her fingertips through the stickiness. “We’re gonna need more wipes.”

* * *

It’s a sleepless night, but not because Resa snores or fidgets in bed. No—after borrowing my toothbrush and cleaning up in the cramped bathroom, Resa flops onto my bed and passes out without another word. Just... gone. Lights out. Felled like a beautiful log.

Chest tight, I tuck the sheets around her and slide in bed at her back.

And then: nothing. Not a wink of sleep all night. Not once the gig has finished and the crowds have melted away, leaving ghostly quiet in the parking lot. Not once all the other bus residents have come back, chatting and banging cupboards, then filed away to their rooms one by one and fallen silent. Not even then.

For hours I lie in bed, wired and awake, as an empty can skitters back and forth across the parking lot outside, nudged around by a lazy breeze.

We're leaving tomorrow. Moving out first thing for a new city, a new gig, a new day. Leaving New Orleans...

And leaving Resa.

Her soft breaths stir the air beside me, and she's so warm and *real*, curving into my side. Will she miss me once we've gone? Will she ever think about me? She's sleeping peacefully right now, not troubled at all by the thought of parting forever.

Someone snorts in their sleep, the sound muffled by the thin bus walls. Muscles aching, I pillow one arm beneath my head.

Maybe I could write to her.

I could come and visit on the few short breaks between cities—fly back and forth overnight.

And maybe after this is all over, I could relocate to New Orleans...

"Mm." Resa sighs in her sleep, wriggling closer to press her forehead against my shoulder. Her breath tickles my skin, and she's so bloody sweet. So innocent.

But no... I can't leave her hanging in limbo like that. Can't put her under pressure to settle down with an older man with no current fixed address. How is that fair to her?

Tonight has been a gift. I'll treasure the memory to my dying day.

But I can't ask any more of Resa Castillo.

Nine

Resa



A door slams somewhere nearby, and I sit bolt upright in bed. Unfamiliar sheets pool around my waist, and as I blink my bleary eyes around the room, nothing makes sense to my addled brain.

Those aren't my bedroom curtains. This isn't my mattress. Even the sounds floating into this room are all wrong—distant clattering and chattering, the low rumble of men's voices and the rhythmic drumming of a shower. Where are the strains of my neighbor's telenovela?

"Wh-what..."

My voice is thick with sleep, and husky from crying out so many times last night. When Beckett—when we—*oh*.

That explains the curtains.

"Good morning." Beckett leans against the wall of his tour bus bedroom, already showered and dressed in a crisp new suit. His arms are folded over his chest, and he's watching me with an odd expression—like he's fighting to keep his real feelings off his handsome face. "The crew are packing up. We'll be rolling out of here in thirty minutes or so."

Rolling out, and heading off on the next step of this tour. Carrying on with this crazy adventure, roaming from city to city,

putting on shows for screaming crowds every night.

Shows.

Crowds.

Oh, shoot. Have the girls seen my message yet? Were they worried about me? It's so unlike me, disappearing like that, and I can't even blame them if they *are* mad.

Don't even know what I was thinking last night, sneaking off to hook up with a strange man. Can't even make sense of it, except that it was with Beckett and it felt so, so right.

Beckett. The man watching me, his forehead pinched in a frown, like he's not sure what to do with me.

Is he waiting for me to leave? Eager to politely kick me out? I have zero experience of this, but the sinking, cold feeling in my stomach seems a bad sign.

"Morning." Yanking the sheets up to cover my bare chest, I force a smile. "Sleep well?"

Beckett makes a noncommittal noise and tucks his hands in his pants pockets. "Do you live far from here, Resa? Can I order a cab to get you home?"

Oof. So it's over just like that, huh?

My strangled laugh makes Beckett jolt, and he frowns harder as I throw back the sheets and swing my legs out of bed. Screw worrying about my nakedness; screw tiptoeing around this room and trying to dress gracefully. My bedhead is always a complete hedgehog-nightmare in the mornings, and there are still flushed patches on my chest where Beckett sucked rough kisses last night.

Dignity is off the table.

"I'm not rushing you." Beckett steps to one side, half-blocking the door. "That's not what's happening here, Resa."

Right. "Except you're leaving in thirty minutes, and you want to order my cab home. *So* gentlemanly."

Tugging my clothes back on, I dress with jerky movements, refusing to meet those icy blue eyes. Yesterday, he looked at me like I was the center of his world, his own personal miracle, and today...

Today, I feel small and soiled.

“I simply don’t want to kidnap you.” Now he’s annoyed too, voice clipped and shoulders tense. “Would you rather I let you sleep as the tour bus carried you away?”

Yes. “Obviously not. But you don’t have to be such a jerk about it.”

A muscle leaps in Beckett’s jaw. “Noted,” he grits out. “My apologies.”

Bright sunshine spears through a gap in the curtains, warming up a stripe of my unhappy face. Further down the tour bus, voices clamor and bowls clink in the kitchen area, and there are so many freaking obstacles between me and the way out of here. So many pairs of eyes to watch my walk of shame, so many lewd comments to hear whispered in my wake.

This sucks so, so much.

“Well.” Shouldering my backpack, I hit Beckett with a big, false smile. It’s kinda mean, but I don’t regret it when he winces, because this morning has made me feel so oily and awful. Like a tar slick in his pristine bed. “Bye. This sure has been... an education.”

Yesterday’s blisters throbbing inside my shoes, I stomp to the door. Beckett hesitates, then steps out of my face, his expression pained. “Resa...”

How dare he sound so hollow? *I’m* the one being tossed out like yesterday’s trash right now. I’m the one who gave my v-card to an emotionally frigid British dude, damn it.

My palm smacks against the door, shoving it open. “See ya never.”

“Wait—”

My bag jostles against the door frame as I lurch out into the cramped hallway. Even with the tour bus standing still, I guess I haven't found my sea legs yet. Or maybe everything we did last night turned my knees to permanent jelly, and now I'm doomed to go through the rest of my life like this—like some tragic, knock-kneed cowgirl.

“Resa,” Beckett calls behind me, but I charge forward, bouncing off one wall. Everyone on this bus will think I'm drunk if I can't walk in a straight freaking line. “Resa!”

Voices float all around, some drifting through closed bedroom doors and a few louder ones echoing from the kitchen area. Squaring my shoulders, I lift my chin and stride down the bus, nodding at the startled crew members hunched around the table, spoons hovering above their cereal bowls.

“Hey,” I mutter, cheeks flaming hot as I stomp past.

“...Hi?” one guy says as I reach the door, wrestling with the stupid thing with clammy hands, desperate to get it open.

“Resa.” Beckett's low, clipped voice right behind me makes my eyes sting, and I yank harder on the stupid, useless door handle. “Hang on, there's a button. Let me—”

The tour bus door opens with a hiss, and I clatter out into the parking lot. There are more glossy black tour buses out here, all standing in a line, with huge battered equipment trucks and around a dozen smaller cars and camper vans, all clustered together in the morning sunshine. Voices bounce around the lot as people call to each other, so stupidly energized after their late night yesterday, and vehicle doors slam as engines rumble to life.

They really are about to move out, then. This convoy is on the move.

Goodbye, Beckett. Goodbye, whatever *this* was.

“Resa,” he says now, stumbling out of the bus behind me, tugging his suit jacket straight. “Wait, I need to say something. I

need to—” His voice cracks, horrified. “Hang on. Are you crying?”

Sniffling, I wipe a line of snot on my bare arm. Well, it’s not like I can go any lower, is it? “Of course I’m crying!”

I mean, he’s seen my morning, hasn’t he? He witnessed the whole shit show firsthand, so this should not be a plot twist.

Can’t believe I missed Soul Obsession for this. My one chance to meet the band. Tugging on the lilac reunion tour t-shirt that Beckett bought me yesterday, I try and fail to stop my chin from wobbling. And it’s hot already this morning, so hot and sticky and stifling, and I can’t believe I have to go back to my tiny studio apartment and pretend I’m not a whole different person from twenty four hours ago.

“Shit.” Beckett scrapes one palm down his face, then steps toward me, arms outstretched. “I’m so sorry. Come here, Angel.”

“I’m not going to hug you after all that, you maniac.”

But my words make me a liar, because as soon as Beckett steps close, I collapse against his stupid chest with a shaky sigh of relief. That creeping frost inside me thaws the tiniest bit, and the hollow feeling in my stomach eases.

I need this man so much. *Love* him so much already.

And he’s so happy to let me go.

But—not yet. For now, strong arms wrap around me, holding me tight. Beckett clutches me to his chest like I’m something precious, like I’m not all bed-rumpled and sticky from last night, my skin burning from the humiliation of walking past all those strangers in the tour bus kitchen. He presses his face to the top of my head, breathing me in like I’m his only source of oxygen, and it makes no freaking sense, no sense at all, but it sure helps soothe the raw hurt inside me.

“You’re such a jerk,” I tell his collarbone, the pointy corner of his shirt collar prodding my cheek.

“I know. God, I handled that so badly.” Beckett hugs me even tighter. “I’m so sorry, Resa. So, so sorry. I—my brain broke when I realized I had to say goodbye to you this morning, and you bore the brunt of my stupidity.”

Sunshine licks warm over my bare arms, and I cuddle closer to Beckett’s chest. So close that we’re pressed together from head to foot, and one strong puff of wind could topple us over. Did he just say...?

“It broke your brain,” I repeat slowly, testing out the words. My stomach’s churning again, but without some different emotion this time. Something like... hope. “In a good way? I mean—because you’ll miss me too?”

Beckett’s laugh is broken, tingling against my scalp. “Because I don’t know how I’ll function without you, Resa.” His breath puffs, ruffling my short hair. “Because every cell in my body is screaming at me to bundle you back onto that bus and take you with me, or—or pack up my stuff and stay with you here, or just —”

“Okay.”

Stunned silence above me.

Across the parking lot, a camper van rattles to life and circles slowly around the grouped vehicles, then heads toward the exit.

A black tour bus engine coughs and rumbles.

Another.

Another.

“Which one?” Beckett asks urgently, pressing me away by my shoulders and staring into my eyes. “Am I staying here or are you coming on tour? Which one, Resa? We’ll make it work either way—I’ll send someone to collect your things, or I’ll quit this job—but we have ten seconds to decide.”

Uh, duh. Easiest quiz question ever.

Patting his wrist, I beam up into Beckett's wan face. "I'm coming with you, obviously. I haven't even seen the Soul Obsession gig yet."

And what am I leaving behind anyway? Two different bartending gigs, a cluttered studio with broken AC, and a constant itchy restlessness under my skin. This is not a hard decision, just like tipping forward and kissing my grumpy writer is the most natural thing in the world. The parking lot spins around us, so warm and sunshine-bright, and even the insects buzzing around us in swarms can't ruin this moment.

When we kiss, everything makes sense. Everything is right again.

When we kiss, my racing, panicked heart finally settles into a slow, blissful thump.

Our lips part reluctantly, and my pulse throbs between my legs, suggesting—no, *demanding*—that we pick up where we left off last night, already. Need this man stripped out of his suit, his styled hair rumpled, and the sheets bunched beneath his bare back.

But: "You're sure?" Beckett presses, even as *our* tour bus grumbles awake, engine rumbling. Even as hands smack at the tinted windows above us, urging us to hurry up. "You're really sure this is what you want, sweetheart?"

Catching his hand, I drag him to the open door in answer.

Ten

Beckett



Two years later

“Weird place for a rock star,” Resa says, standing at the window of our suite in the *Daybreak Inn*. Her hands are propped on her hips, a baggy red t-shirt tucked into her frayed denim shorts, and the sunset glows behind my wife, outlining her perfect silhouette in fire. “Sweet Cherry Cove. Sounds like one of those vintage travel postcards. *Come along for sun, sea and sand!*”

I place our bags on the quilted bedspread. “Plenty of rock stars have run away to stranger places.”

Resa snorts, squinting out of the window at the town below in all its kitschy glory. When she turns, the sunset outlines the small curve of her baby bump, and just like every time I catch a glimpse—my throat sticks. Can’t believe I ever got so lucky. “Well, I guess you’d know.”

Massaging one stiff shoulder, I join Resa by the window.

“True. I *am* the world authority of flighty musicians.” Thank god, or we may never have met—and Resa and I might never have built this life together, touring around the world to write profiles together on artists in their prime.

Well—that’s what we’ve been doing so far, though lately we’ve been touring more to find our forever home. Somewhere

to raise our bump. “Is that an honest-to-god ice cream parlor down there? With a striped awning?”

My wife’s laugh is soft, and her head tips back against my shoulder when I stand behind her. “We’ve spent too long in cities. There’s a simpler life out there, apparently.”

“And Dalton Meadows wants a piece of it.”

Resa’s cheeks lift as she smiles. “I heard he fell in love.”

“Poor bastard.” My wife squirms as I kiss her neck. “He’ll never be the same again.”

For long moments, quiet fills the hotel suite, broken only by the rustle of clothes and our quickened breaths. Resa’s shorts fall around her ankles before she kicks them off; her palms smack against the window, rattling the glass panes as she braces herself.

“So wet.” My lips graze the shell of Resa’s ear, and shivers wrack her frame. She’s sweet and pliant as I nudge her heels wider, her hips already tilted to take me, and my fingertips glide easily along her seam. “Always so wet for me, aren’t you, sweetheart? Tell me, do you need it?”

I already know she does—and we’re up here alone in our private world, high above any prying eyes.

Sure enough, Resa whimpers, her bare ass jutting out. It’s taking every ounce of my control to hold out for this long. “Uh-huh. *Please*, Beckett. I need it so bad.”

As I sink inside her, the sunset flares crimson and gold.

* * *

Thanks for reading Access All Areas! I hope you loved it. :)

The next book in the Galentine’s Groupies series is [Bad Boy’s Convenient Wife](#) by Mayra Statham. *Turns out my quiet neighbor is none other than the bad boy from the boy band I used to listen to as a teenager! And he’s made me an offer I can’t refuse...*

For Dalton Meadow's story, check out [Rock God](#)! *I loved him for years, and he was clueless. He left and never looked back. Now the rock star sends me an invitation—to our wedding.*

And for a bonus instalove story, grab your copy of [Ride or Die](#). *She's sweet and innocent—and that's like catnip in this strip club. It's okay, though. I won't let the pretty bartender out of my sight.*

Happy reading!

Cassie xxx

Teaser: Rock God

Sure, he sent me mail. When Dalton first went on tour, when he was just starting to make it big, he wrote me a postcard from every town he stopped in. Did that for a long time.

Then there were the letters every New Year's Eve, explaining his hopes and dreams for the coming year, and asking about mine. Another one of our traditions.

There were birthday gifts, and care packages when I was sick. Sometimes a funny little stuffed animal or an ugly fridge magnet just because.

For years and years after he left, Dalton sent me mail.

And I wrote back. Like an idiot.

Early on, I sent him cut-outs from my college campus magazine, and articles from the local newspaper I knew he'd like. 'Goose terrorizes middle school over recess', stuff like that. Dalton always loved anything absurd.

I sent birthday gifts and holiday cards. I wrote out my hopes and dreams too every New Year's Eve. One humiliating year, I sent a Valentine. Did his agent roll her eyes as she sorted his mail?

On and on, we kept up this charade—this shared lie that Dalton was just off to seek his fortune, but someday, somehow, we'd meet again.

I should have stopped it all sooner. For my heart, if not my pride. But you have to understand that for all those years as Dalton and I grew up next door to each other, changing from scabby-kneed kids to awkward, gangling teenagers, he was *it* for me. The sun in my sky. My best friend and my crush.

And boy, did he crush me.

Yeah, I should have stopped the letter thing sooner.

Maybe it would have been less weird if we were texting or emailing too. Keeping in contact in the normal ways. But it's like as soon as Dalton Meadows hit it big, burning a meteoric trail through the charts, he lost my number. Ghosted by a rock star. Well, I can't be the only one, can I?

And still I wrote back. Still I hoped. On and on and on.

Until three years ago at my college graduation, I swore to myself: no more. This was my fresh start, my first step into real-deal adult life, and I couldn't bring the Dalton thing with me. It was too heavy, dragging around all that unrequited love.

So I stopped opening the things he sent. Stopped writing back. Kept his unopened letters and packages in a box at the back of my closet, buried under a mound of scuffed shoes.

Ancient history.

* * *

It takes forever to get off the plane, and everyone's hot and cranky and tired. We're jammed in like sardines, passengers wrestling carry-on cases down from the overhead lockers and huffing when they clip each other's heads, waiting for the air steward to open the plane doors already. The recycled air is stale.

I don't have a case. Only my battered college backpack, grabbed in a hurry from my closet and stuffed with my passport, my laptop, a few handfuls of clothes, and the printed out manuscript I've been reading for work. The crinkled pages are scrawled with my notes in red pen.

Don't know why I brought it, because I didn't read a single word of it on the flight. I only read the piece of card in my pocket, over and over and over, until I got lightheaded and had to stare out of the window at the clouds.

RSVP. What the hell?

The rumble of the plane engine dies, and the nearest door swings open. Sunlight! Fresh air! I'm a dozen rows of seats away,

and it feels like a mile. We all shuffle forward, inch by cranky inch.

Everyone else grumbles about baggage claim and running for connections, but it all washes over my head. I'm in my own world, chewing on my thumbnail as I file toward the exit.

What on earth is Dalton thinking? Is this some kind of prank? When I get to this Sweet Cherry Cove place, will a reality TV crew jump out at me and film my reaction? I can't think of any other explanation.

Dalton was never cruel, not once when I knew him. But maybe fame has changed him, you know? Twisted him up into someone who'd mess with their childhood bestie for money and attention.

If so, this prank is pure evil.

I grip the invitation in my clammy hand. I've held and squeezed and thumbed it so much the words are blurring, but you can still read them: *You are cordially invited to the wedding of Alba Hernandez and Dalton Meadows. RSVP.*

RSVP my ass. I don't care that Dalton's a big time rock star these days, I'll kill him for this. No security detail will stop me.

Sunshine warms my face as I climb down the creaky wheeled staircase, the fresh breeze lifting my hair. I'm too worked up to speak as I wander through the small airport, flashing my passport and fiddling with the invitation in my pocket.

Seriously. What is he thinking? How could he do this to me?

Forty minutes later, my cab swings around a curve on the cliff path and a seaside town comes into view, nestled down by the beach. It's sprawling but cute, with pastel-painted terraced houses and white boats bobbing in a marina. The ocean is so blue.

"That's us," the driver rasps. He's craggy and dark-haired with feathery eyebrows, and his whole cab smells like cigarette ash. "Sweet Cherry Cove. So. You meeting anyone special?"

* * *

Check out [Rock God!](#)

xxx

The Galentine's Groupies series

When former boy band heartthrobs, Soul Obsession, announce their long-awaited reunion tour, a group of friends seize the chance for an epic girls' getaway following the tour from city to city.

Backstage passes help them rediscover their sisterhood...until sparks fly between the gal pals and the guys in the band. Suddenly, this reunion tour becomes a harmony of the heart, where new romance blossoms. Soul Obsession's farewell tour is about to become the love note of the year.

Eight of your favorite instalove authors are taking you on a rom-com adventure to remember this Galentine's Day. Grab your girlfriends, get your tickets, and prepare to swoon!

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Cassie Mint

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Cassie writes outrageous, OTT insta-love with tons of sugar and spice. She loves cookie dough, summer barbecues, and her gorgeous cat Missy.

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