



DOWN TO

Puck



REGINA WADE

DOWN TO PUCK

Snowhawks

Book 2

REGINA WADE

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Yasmín

HOCKEY IS LIKE MEDICINE— exciting, challenging, and *bloody*.

“Things are heating up on the ice tonight, folks—” the announcer’s voice rings out over the charged roar of the crowd. “*Oh!* And there it is. Kai Mita and Miami Rays’ captain Sergei Balishnikoff have dropped their gloves.”

The stands are packed. Fans scream and cheer as bodies slam into the boards, spraying ice across the penalty box.

“Looks like Mita is taking matters into his own hands after a brutal attack on Snowhawks’ own number seventeen—”

The visceral play-by-play cuts off abruptly as I shove through a set of stainless-steel double doors and into the brightly lit corridor of a well-appointed triage area.

I’ve been working at *The Nest* since my last semester of medical school. The Houston Snowhawks’ cutting-edge stadium and training facility was designed from the ground up with hockey in mind. In addition to player housing and a sprawling workout compound, *The Nest* is home to the best sports injury hospital and physical therapy center in the state.

I joined the Hawks’ healthcare team at the start of my residency. Since then, I’ve worked under the careful eye of the orthopedists, athletic trainers, and PT specialists who keep the Snowhawks on ice. But tonight, everyone is looking to *me* for answers.

Last week I got the twenty-fourth birthday present of my dreams when Snowhawks team owner Mike Dominican offered me a permanent position as a junior team physician.

Now here I am, fifty-two minutes into my first night on the job— and

racing toward an emergency.

“Hey, Doc—” Sawyer looks up as I rush into the room. “I’m glad you’re here.”

Sawyer Lawson is the best center in the league. Sharp, quick, and focused, Sawyer is usually two steps ahead of the rest of the team. He’s also the Hawks’ captain and— if the rumors are to be believed— a complete cinnamon roll off the ice.

With his blonde hair, blue eyes, and laid-back Southern charm, it isn’t hard to see how Sawyer earned the nickname *Captain America*.

He doesn’t look especially relaxed at the moment. Sawyer is pacing the length of the room, his long strides eating up the tile floor. There’s blood splattered across the front of his kit— mottled splotches of maroon that look nearly black beneath the fluorescent lights.

“What happened out there?” I wrench open my medical bag and tug on a pair of gloves. “I couldn’t see the fight from where I was sitting.”

Sawyer shakes his head. I’ve never seen him angry before, but there’s cold fury behind his eyes now.

“There was no fight. Two assholes took a cheap shot at Emerson.” Sawyer jerks a thumb over his shoulder, indicating the player strapped to the gurney behind him. “They hit him from behind— and they kept hitting him after he was down.”

Emerson Stone is closing in on the league record for most game-winning goals in a single season. The Snowhawks forward is popular with the press— and even more popular with the girls on social media. *#HockeyHusband* has been trending nonstop since the Hawks’ final roster was announced.

Emerson also spends most of his off days volunteering at the Third Ward housing projects where he grew up. He created a co-ed junior hockey league coached by several of his teammates and donates most of his substantial earnings. It’s a side of him that the media never sees. But everyone at *The Nest* knows Emerson Stone has the biggest heart in the NHL.

And the hardest skull.

“Tell me he’s going to be okay, Doc.” Sawyer’s jaw is clenched, a muscle ticking in his cheek.

There’s an unwritten rule in medicine: catch feelings, people die.

A physician needs to be able to distance themselves from their patients. Staying neutral and unaffected by injuries is what sports medicine is all about.

Seeing Emerson strapped to a backboard, blood soaked into his hair and clothes, it's impossible to remain impartial. The space between me and the rest of the team melts away. I may not be on skates, but tonight— I'm a Snowhawk.

"I'll take care of him, Captain." I square my shoulders and look up into Sawyer's face. "Get back on the ice. The team needs you."

Sawyer nods once before stalking away without another word. I turn to Emerson, his movement restricted by the cervical collar around his neck.

I'd hate to be on the other team right now.

"MR. STONE, do you remember me? I'm Doctor Rashidi— Yasmín." I click the penlight with my thumb, sweeping the soft beam between his pupils. "Can you tell me where you are?"

Emerson's eyes are soft seafoam, caught somewhere between blue and green and ringed with muted shades of gold. They remind me of early mornings at the beach as a kid.

"Yeah. I know where I am." Emerson nods sagely. "I'm in heaven. Have to be, 'cause I'm seeing angels."

The corner of his mouth tugs up in a slow smile.

"I've never seen anything so beautiful," He reaches out to brush his fingertips across my heated face. "Don't even mind being dead if I get to look at you forever."

The room tilts, then rights itself before my next breath. *Nerves*, I assure myself. *Just a little first-night anxiety*. There's no other explanation for my tachycardic heartbeat, or the way my skin crackles with fire beneath his touch.

"No sign of spinal cord injury or internal bleeding," my voice is steady, despite the tremble in my stomach and the lump in my throat. "Pupils sluggish, but responsive. Initial neurological assessment reveals intact cranial nerve function and sensation in all extremities."

I swallow hard and continue my assessment. The team is counting on me — now is no time to develop an acute case of *tummy butterflies*. My own fingers move gently along the edge of the brace at Emerson's neck. I'm checking for injuries, but it's impossible to ignore the way his pulse jumps

beneath my touch. When he speaks again, the deep rumble of his voice vibrates through my hand and into my bloodstream.

“That’s *definitely* giving me a sensation in my extremities,” Emerson’s laugh is muted by pain and opiates. “Maybe I should get hit in the head more often.”

Beside me, the medical scribe is taking notes as fast as I rattle them off. Her pen never stops moving, but her eyes are darting between Emerson’s face and mine. I don’t have to look around to know that all of the PAs and athletic trainers are looking at us, too.

“The game—” Emerson blinks twice, and the fog clears from his gaze. “I was on the ice, and then something hit me.”

He goes to shake his head and stops with a pained groan.

“Easy, Emerson.” I place one hand on the center of his chest to keep him from trying to sit up. “You were injured during the game. You’ve got a nasty laceration on your head. I’m going to take the collar off, and then I’m going to have to stitch you up, okay?”

Beneath my palm, Emerson’s chest is carved from solid steel. His jersey is open— cut down the middle by the first responders to check for major injuries. The two halves hang open now, revealing deep bruises and long-healed scars.

“I prefer to be on the other end of the leash.” Emerson’s voice is low and dark with promise. “But I’m willing to make an exception for you, Angel. You can do whatever you want, as long as you keep your hands on me.”

According to his chart, Emerson is five-foot-nine. You’d never know it to watch the man play. In the rink, he runs circles out of guys five and six inches taller. That swagger is on full display now.

On skates or on a gurney, Emerson Stone is the biggest thing in the room.

“Okay, tough guy.” I wait as two nurses help him up to a sitting position. “Let’s get you patched up and off to the CT and MRI machines.”

Emerson’s legs hang over the edge of the bed. His thighs are wide as tree trunks, his calves sculpted and thick. Beneath the open halves of his shirt, the tight ridges of a six-pack lead to the most defined v-cut I’ve ever witnessed.

I’ve seen less-perfect renderings of the male form in medical textbooks.

“If you want to know what’s going on inside my head, Angel—” Emerson grins like a hungry wolf as I step between his thighs. “All you have to do is ask.”

Lightning flashes behind his aquamarine eyes.

“This might sting a little.” My voice is quiet—breathier than it should be.

I’m caged between Emerson’s legs, close enough to smell the ice, sweat, and blood that clings to him. He doesn’t flinch—doesn’t even blink as I inject a local anesthetic into his forehead. I clean the wound gently, dabbing softly along his rust-colored hairline until the entire length of the cut is disinfected.

Suturing a wound is something I’ve done too many times to count. I could sterilize and close a laceration in my sleep. I’m pretty sure I’ve done exactly that at least once during medical school.

But there’s something different about this— a vulnerable intimacy that I’ve never felt before.

Emerson’s eyes never leave my face. There’s an intense, determined look in them— like he’s fighting to hold on to a memory before it disappears. My hands are steadier than I feel as I stitch him closed with a thin length of nylon.

“All done,” I set my tools down and peel off the powder blue latex gloves with a *snap*. “How are you feel—”

Emerson’s lips crash against mine.

Every thought in my head evaporates as time slows to a crawl. My heart pounds frantically in my chest. It’s not my first kiss— I managed to get *that* far in medical school, even if there wasn’t time for much beyond a few exploratory pecks in the library after hours.

But this?

This is so much more than that.

Emerson kisses me like he needs it to survive. His lips are soft against mine, his tongue eager as it teases and licks at my mouth. Heat and need thrum inside of me, drowning out every ounce of common sense I have left.

“I love you, Angel,” Emerson whispers fiercely against my lips. “I’ve been looking for you my whole life.”

Then he passes out.

Emerson

One Week Later

HEAD INJURIES SUCK.

Hockey is blood on ice. I've always trained hard and made myself fast enough to avoid getting hit. But even without getting checked into the boards every night, just playing the game strains you. I've put my body through the ringer.

But I'll take any number of broken bones over this.

Every day this week, I've woken up in a haze. My brain is full of fog, and every step takes effort. Even my thoughts are sluggish. The simplest things take twice as long as they should.

My day starts like it always does. Up before the sun and jog to the ice for a warm-up. The early fall weather is still warm and humid in Houston.

Hell might actually freeze over before Houston has a dry day.

I like getting to the rink before anyone else. There's a simple joy in being the first to touch the ice. It's like drawing on a fresh piece of paper, painting on a blank canvas.

I set up cones and start puck handling.

I've always felt a connection to the ice, to the puck, that I lack with other people in my life. Regular hockey players have a life outside the game. Even our defenseman Kai—the most devoted and hard-headed bastard in the league—has recently started dating the new assistant manager.

The ice is the only place I'm graceful. Talking to women or going through the motions of online dating feels hollow and awkward to me. Any time I've been interested in someone, I've put my skate in my mouth.

And my Angel is no exception.

The puck slips from my stick for the first time that I can remember. I push myself hard, catching up to it as I weave back and forth between the cones. For a moment, I'm worried the lingering dizziness might sweep over me, but my vision clears quickly.

I kissed her.

I don't remember much, but I'll never forget the feeling of her lips on mine. The softness, the sweetness. The way she leaned in, her tongue sliding across mine. There was a passion in her kiss.

Why can't I remember her name?

There are snippets and images tucked away in my mind. Dark hair, mahogany eyes, skin as soft as a peach.

Somewhere in the middle of the battery of tests, my Angel slipped away from me, and I haven't seen her since. She must be on the staff, and that means I'll find her. I'll do whatever it takes to hear that sweet voice again.

I'm beginning to think I imagined her. That she was simply the result of the Miami Rays' percussive therapy on my skull with a stick.

The puck slips again. Maybe there's something wrong with the ice? My laces are loose. I must have forgotten to tighten them. My thoughts take a while to surface from the quicksand of my head.

"I've never seen you have so much trouble, Emerson," Sawyer calls out from the stands as I bend to tighten the laces on my skate.

Sawyer Lawson, team captain. He's always the second guy to arrive at practice, after me. He's a natural leader — the kind of man who makes all of us want to be better.

He'd be annoying if he wasn't so charismatic.

"Forgot to tighten my laces. Rookie mistake. Must have gotten hit harder than I thought," I joke.

Sawyer doesn't laugh.

"About that. Coach wants to meet with the team. We've got to talk about your injury, and where we're going from here."

Coach Owen Morgan joined the Snowhawk's organization the day after my injury. Sawyer's known him since high school, and Morgan's daughter Skylar is already on the physical therapy team.

I make a face. Talking about myself is the worst. A meeting about my own injury might as well be torture.

"I'd rather just focus on drills, Cap. Get back in shape." I swoop between two of the cones on the ice. "I got hit because I wasn't fast enough. That just means I need to get faster."

Sawyer grimaces, shaking his head.

"We all get hit, Em. It's what we do after that really defines us. But I thought you might be reluctant." He stands, stretching lazily. "Guess I'll have to pull out the big guns."

I'm the shortest Snowhawk by a few inches, but I've never let that matter. I'm big where it counts, and everyone knows it. Skating up to Sawyer now, I look him in the eye, trying to read the smug expression on his face.

“What are you going to do, Sawyer?” I glare at him. “Make me?”

Sawyer laughs, shaking his head.

“Nope. I’m just going to tell you that your doctor from the game is going to be there.” He grins. “The one you’ve been asking all over *The Nest* about. She specifically asked for you.”

All at once, the anger rising inside me gutters out like a candle in the wind.

“My Angel?” My mouth works independently of my brain.

Sawyer gives me a confused look but nods.

“Yeah.” He waits as I exit the ice and untie my skates. “But her name isn’t Angel, it’s Yasmín.”

I snort.

“Not like that, Cap. She’s *my* Angel.” I don’t care how it sounds. I need to tell someone. “I came to and there she was. One look at her and I just *knew*. Has that ever happened to you?”

Sawyer shakes his head, but for a second I swear there’s a moment of hesitation there. But I blink, and his smile is back in place. Damn head trauma.

“No. But Kai says the same thing about Dakota,” Sawyer smiles.

Kai Mita is our biggest, baddest D-man. A terror on the ice. I’m glad he’s on my team because he’s the scariest guy in the league. Watching him destroy Sergei after he hit me has been one of the few highlights of my week.

Dakota is the team’s new new assistant manager. She used to work for a local newspaper before falling in love with both the team and Kai. Smart, sharp, and strategically minded, Dakota is a Snowhawk at heart.

She came by to check on me twice this week. She’s a sweet girl with a steel core. I can see why she and Kai get along.

“Yeah. That’s not exactly reassuring, you know,” I pull my shoes on, throwing my skates around my neck.

“Come on. Let’s go. No matter what happens, I’ve got your back, alright?” Sawyer tells me, his arm going around my shoulder as we walk away from the ice.

The way Sawyer says that should fill me with trepidation. It’s the kind of thing someone says right before they deliver the really bad news. But fear is the last thing I’m feeling. Excitement burns deep inside me.

My Angel.

THE NEST IS A CRAZY PLACE. It doesn't take us long to get from the practice ice to the central campus. People wave at us as we go, even this early in the morning.

"I'm never going to get used to being popular," I shake my head. "I don't know how you manage it, Sawyer."

Sawyer chuckles, pushing open the big glass doors of the main building.

"That's my secret. I don't manage. I just stay focused on the team," he says as I follow him inside.

The meeting room is on the first floor, which I'm glad about. I don't really feel up to climbing the stairs.

The team is already assembled and waiting for us. Parker Knight, the rookie forward, is sitting in one of the plush leather chairs near the window. Beside him, goalie Erik Nordstrom is leaning casually against a wall, scrolling through his phone. Kai has bypassed the chairs altogether, opting to sit on the edge of Coach Morgan's desk.

Several of the guys are wearing sunglasses and drinking from large cups of coffee — hungover from their nightly bar crawl. I haven't had a drop, but it doesn't stop me from *feeling* hungover, the bright lights of the office stabbing into my eye like an ice pick.

"So as you can see, the preliminary results look good. But I'm concerned. Dakota noted he was slow at times, sluggish." I recognize her voice first. "There are definite signs of brain fog. I want to get another X-ray, and then do a full workup. I've already requested both an MRI and a CT—"

She stops when the door opens, spinning to watch us walk in.

My Angel.

She's real. And she's the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. That low, smoky voice has been living in my head for days. Rich and husky, like she's always on the verge of a wicked laugh.

"Ah, Mister Stone," Coach's voice drips sarcasm. "How kind of you to join us. Take a seat."

I nod, but can't tear my eyes away from the woman standing at the front of the room. She's short, with long black hair and expressive eyes the color of dark coffee. The lab coat and jeans she's wearing do nothing to hide the compact curves underneath. Her full mouth tilts up into a smile as I make my way into the room.

“Sorry,” I squeeze in between Erik and Park. “I just found out about this meeting, or I would have been here earlier.”

Sandwiched between them, I feel a little like a pebble nestled among boulders. But everyone on the team has only ever shown me respect. It’s just one of the reasons I love playing with these guys.

I hate feeling like I’m letting them down.

“Emerson,” My Angel— *Yasmín*— nods at me. “I need you to come in for some more testing before I can clear you to play again. You’re still showing signs of traumatic brain injury.”

I blink, then hold one hand over my eye.

“What?” I blow out a breath, keeping my voice neutral. “You mean no one else here feels like someone is trying to push their brain out of their eye socket from the inside?”

There are a few sympathetic chuckles from the more hungover members of the squad, but *Yasmín* doesn’t laugh. If anything, she looks more concerned now.

“They have an excuse.” She puts her hands on her hips, and it takes a herculean effort not to watch the way it makes her cleavage bounce. “I’m going to assume you weren’t out celebrating all night?”

I shake my head, gritting my teeth against the pain.

“No, doc. I’ve been following orders.” I hold up my hands. “Don’t worry, I’ll follow these too. Run all the tests you need. I’m sick of feeling like crap and ready to get back on the ice.”

Coach Morgan clears his throat, interrupting *Yasmín* before she can respond. She glances at him and a look of affection crosses her face. If I wasn’t studying her so intensely, I might have missed it.

“Dr. Rashidi, why don’t you take Emerson over to get those scans now?” Coach’s voice is mild.

She nods.

“Sure thing. Can I get Skylar in there too? I really want to start therapy as soon as possible.” *Yasmín* smiles warmly at him.

Coach Morgan chuckles, shaking his head.

“Ask her yourself, Yas. You know my answer will always be yes when it comes to you girls,” Coach says.

That explains it then.

“Go on, you two. Everyone else, hang back. We’ve got to talk about some stuff,” Coach Morgan says, glancing at the rest of the team.

I sigh.

“You mean you need to talk about who you’re going to replace me with until I get better.” I laugh, but there’s not much humor in it. “It’s alright. I’m not a kid. I don’t need you walking on eggshells around me. For what it’s worth, I think it’s time for Parker to suit up.”

Parker looks up, happy surprise on his face.

“Agreed,” Erik rumbles.

A few heads turn toward the goalie, waiting for more. But I know better. Erik is a man of few words.

Sawyer grimaces, then forces a smile to his face.

“We’ll talk about it, Em but I agree.” he claps me on the shoulder. “Go with Yasmín. Get your scans, get your shit together, and then get back on the ice where we need you.”

The conversation is quiet as we exit, the doctor leading the way. I can hear voices erupt in argument a second before the door closes behind us, muffling them.

Even the presence of my Angel isn’t enough to stop my heart from aching. I hate feeling weak.

“I feel like I let them down.” I look over at her. “I know that’s stupid, but —”

She puts a hand on my arm, stopping me.

“No. it isn’t. It’s understandable.” There’s a fire in her dark eyes, and I know she isn’t just placating me. “But the only way you would actually let them down is by not focusing on getting better. Come on, let’s go. I promise I won’t bite.”

Her smile washes away the pain and soothes my aching heart.

“Are you sure about that? I seem to recall you biting me a little,” I chuckle as we walk.

The echo of her shoes on the floor slows to a stop. I realize, suddenly, that I put my foot in my mouth again.

“I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said that,” I turn to look at her. “I took a hit to the head. I’m sure I’m not remembering right.”

Her eyes are smoldering, but there’s no anger in them. They look exactly like they did right after we kissed. We stand there for a long minute, tension burning between us.

“Guess I’ve got to jog your memory, then,” Yasmín steps closer and leans up on her tiptoes.

It takes me by surprise when she reaches up to pull my mouth down to hers. Then I close my eyes, wrapping both arms around her waist as I claim her mouth— again.

This kiss is nothing like the first. That one was rushed— taken instinctively with no time for thought. This one is slower, measured. Yasmín’s eyes meet mine as our lips brush against each other. I can feel my heart skip a beat, hammering in my chest as her lips close around mine.

Her body feels perfect against mine, her soft curves molding against the peaks and valleys of my hard muscles. She moans against my lips as I slide my tongue into her mouth, exploring, meeting hers, and tangling together.

When we break apart, both of us are panting. The look in her wide eyes is wild.

“I’m sorry—” she says, one hand clamped over her mouth. “I don’t know what I was thinking. This is a terrible idea.”

She turns, walking down the hall and leaving me to follow. The swing in her hips is mesmerizing.

I’ve never been more confused and aroused in my life.

Yasmín

I CLOSE the door of my apartment hard, falling back against it before sinking to the thick carpet and burying my face in my knees.

“Rough day?”

I bolt upright at the sound of my roommate’s voice.

“Oh fuck— sorry.” I scrub the sleeve of my hoodie across my eyes, wiping up tears. “I didn’t think you were home.”

Skylar rounds the corner from the kitchen. She strides down the hallway, taking in my defeated seat on the floor. Without another word, she slides down the length of the wall to plop down next to me.

“Well,” she gives me a wry half-smile. “I’ve been back in the same zip code as my parents for forty-eight hours, and my mother has asked about grandkids twice. So I decided to take a mental health day. *Twice, Yas.*”

She wiggles two fingers at me with a strangled laugh.

Despite the emotions and confusion storming through me, I can’t help but laugh along.

Skylar Morgan has been my best friend since before I knew what a best friend was. We grew up two doors down from each other in San Diego, closer than most sisters.

My happiest childhood memories all revolve around Skylar’s rambling beachfront house, filled with laughter and the scent of something delicious on the stove.

My mother spent so many late nights in the operating room or doing hospital rounds that the Morgans had a bunk bed put into Skylar’s room for me. They took me on every family vacation, included me in all of their

holiday celebrations.

When I was offered an early admission and full scholarship to Rice University, I waited until I was sure Skylar got accepted before making a decision. The same day Sky landed a job on the Snowhawks massage therapy team, she walked my resume over to the head of the medical staff.

“Glad to see they’re handling the move well.” I nudge Skylar’s shoulder with my own. “Your dad deserves the job— I’m happy for him. Hawks are about to have a hell of a season.”

Owen Morgan is a retired marine and, until last week, a college hockey coach. Skylar’s dad taught some of the best players in the league— including Snowhawks team captain Sawyer Lawson. As much as Sky bitches about it, I know she’s thrilled to have her family close again.

“He’s going to be the best coach in the league.” Skylar nods, pride lighting up face. “Now—”

She shifts, turning to look at me from her spot on the rug.

“Pizza and wings will be here in twenty minutes.” As if on cue, Skylar’s stomach rumbles loudly. “And don’t you *dare* say a word, or I won’t save you any. Start talking, Yas. What’s got you upset?”

Ignoring the warning, I roll my eyes. Skylar eats like a twelve-year-old boy on summer vacation. Her metabolism works at the speed of light, and if I didn’t love her so much, I would definitely hate her for it.

Sky has a tight, athletic frame. We played all the same sports in high school, but apparently my body never got the message.

Blonde hair, blue eyes, golden tan — Skylar is living Malibu Barbie, complete with surfboard and lower back tattoo.

“It’s ok,” she slings one arm over my shoulder and squishes me in a side hug. “I’ll listen whenever you’re ready. We can just sit for now.”

I swallow past the lump in my throat.

“I think I maybe, possibly, *might* have a crush on one of the guys,” I blurt out with a wince.

The words are hollow half-truths. What I feel for Emerson can’t be called something as trivial as a *crush*. I’m falling for him— I have been since I looked into those turquoise eyes for the first time.

“Oh, honey,” Skylar shakes her head and squeezes me again. “Don’t make *me* be the sensible one. These guys are professional athletes. You know they’re all trouble.”

She shoots me a sideways glance.

“Except for Sawyer. He seems okay, I guess.” She sniffs dismissively. “Is it Sawyer?”

I Shake my head.

“No, not him. It’s Emerson,” I blow out the breath I’ve been holding for a week. “Emerson Stone. I treated him after that awful cheap shot on opening night.”

Tension drains from Skylar’s shoulders.

“Emerson. Yeah, that makes sense.” Sky’s pale eyebrows knit together, a serious look on her face. “But Yas, you know it’s practically impossible, right? It can’t work. Like that story— what’s his name? From the myth. The guy with the rock he’s always pushing uphill?”

“Sisyphus?” I ask.

Skylar nods against me.

“Yeah. Trying to date a hockey guy, it’s like pushing that rock. Only the hill is coated in ice. Endless struggle.” Skylar huffs out a sigh. “How many times have you heard Dad say they take too many hits to the head? That’s why they’re so hopeless when it comes to romance. Mom always laughs— but she never corrects him.”

I smile at that. Skylar’s mom and dad are still happily married after thirty years and three kids. A far cry from my own parents, who broke the news of their divorce to me via text. I was in the sixth grade then, and already knew that I was expected to become a surgeon at my mother’s plastic surgery practice. According to her, women don’t belong in sports medicine.

And they certainly shouldn’t be fantasizing about hockey players.

“Emerson’s only had one serious head injury. We’re still waiting on the scans, but I don’t think he has a TBI. And —what?” I stop talking when I feel Skylar laughing next to me.

“Dad doesn’t mean it literally, dork. It’s worse than that. It’s like they love hockey so much that there isn’t room for anything else in their lives. Trust me, I know.” The laughter dies on Skylar’s lips. When she turns to look at me again, her eyes are dark and serious. “If you want his attention, you’re going to have to grab it with both hands.”

I slump down lower against the door.

“How in the world am I supposed to do that?” I sigh. “It’s not like I have a lot of dating experience.”

A lifetime of being repressed doesn’t make for very smooth social interactions. I tried flirting once. The memory still haunts me at three in the

morning when I can't sleep.

"Okay, well, I'm no expert—" she raises an eyebrow when I snort out a laugh, but doesn't argue.

Skylar is in the same boat as I am. The Coach's daughter is always off-limits, whether she likes it or not. But somehow, even my bestie with her overprotective parents and quarterback big brother manages to be less of a romantic disaster than I am.

"You are capable of flirting," I point out. "Nothing burns down when you ask for a guy's number. You're *clearly* better at this than me."

Skylar elbows me in the side.

"First of all, that was *one time*, Yasmín. I promise you, not every first date ends in a grease fire."

I sniff.

"You sound more like my therapist every day," I mumble.

"Good, I'm glad. Apparently, you need to hear it more than once." Sky gets up and reaches a hand out to me. "I swear, Yas, you're the most stubborn person I've ever met."

I let her pull me to my feet.

"Takes one to know one," I grin at her. "*Dork.*"

Skylar rolls her eyes, but she can't hide her smile.

"Alright, let's focus on the important things. Starting with how you're going to bag Emerson Stone." Skylar's eyes light up as she pulls out her phone.

"I recognize that look, Sky. What are you doing?"

She doesn't look up, nimble fingers darting across the screen.

"Being your wingman." Skylar grins triumphantly. "*There.* I just told Dakota I can't come back this afternoon. The only other person cleared to do PT is you, *Doc*. Guess who my afternoon appointment is?"

She looks so pleased with herself that it's almost hard to get mad. Skylar is part of the physical therapy team. And while her specialty is massage therapy, her job also involves a lot of rehabilitation and hands-on manipulation.

I want nothing more than to *manipulate* Emerson's strong, toned body with my bare hands. But there's no way I can put both of our careers in jeopardy like that. Even if he's willing to take the risk, I have no idea what to do.

"No. You *didn't*—" I narrow my eyes at her. "Sky, I'm an introvert with

social anxiety. The closest I've come to a serious relationship was that time the barista at the all-night coffee shop remembered my order."

She throws her head back and laughs again

"I *did*. So," Skyler is practically humming with excitement. "You can either call in sick—which we both know you've never done in your life. Or you can put on your tightest yoga pants and go get your man."

The knot in my throat tightens.

"Sky, please." Tears threaten again. "I'm going to ruin this. I'm un-girlfriendable."

I shake my head, willing her to understand.

"You absolutely are not, Yas." Skylar hauls me in for a tight hug. When she pulls away again, her eyes are misty with emotion. "I've seen the way he looks at you—like you're the only woman in the world. It's the same dopey expression Dad gets when Mom walks in the room."

Heat burns my cheeks. As an only child with cold parents, I've idolized the love between Sky's parents my entire life.

"I've never seen any look," I protest.

Skylar smirks, crossing her arms in front of her chest.

"That's because you only notice textbooks, broken bones, and how well the top rack of the dishwasher is loaded." She ticks off three fingers. "Are you seriously telling me you didn't feel anything between you the other night?"

Heat. The smell of blood and ice. His lips on mine, searing every nerve I have into cinders. Igniting feelings I thought I'd buried a long time ago.

"He, uh. He might have kissed me. But—" I raise a palm to stop Skylar's excited yelp. "He had a *head injury*, Sky. He was calling me his Angel."

Her smile grows into a feral grin, eyes wide.

"Wow," Skylar breathes.

"Yeah," I shove a handful of hair out of my face.

Guilt, fear, and anxiety twist away in my stomach.

"No, I mean wow," Skylar whistles softly. "Even I didn't realize you were this clueless, Yas. You hit the jackpot. Your crush kissed you. Do you know how many women would give their right arm to be kissed by the hockey player of their dreams?"

I roll my eyes, but most of the fight has drained out of me.

"He would have kissed your Dad if he'd been there, Sky. It doesn't mean anything."

Skylar's eyes sparkle with mischief. She leans in close to *boop* my nose with one finger. It's our own little ritual. It also means she knows she's won.

"So go do some science, Doctor Rashidi. Put that medical degree you earned in record time to the test," She straightens. "Kiss him. If he kisses you back, it wasn't an accident."

Skylar turns, marching toward my bedroom. It's a good thing, too. Because one look at me would be enough for her to sniff out the truth.

And I don't know if I'm ready to admit that I already began *experimenting* with Emerson.

"Get your ass in here, Doc," Skylar's voice echoes out from my closet. "I know you have some tights in here somewhere. Where's that sports bra that makes your boobs look great?"

I can't help but laugh.

Time to put my bedside manner to the test.

Emerson

“HARDER, Emerson. Is that all you’ve got?” Yasmín’s voice is low and breathy with exertion. “Don’t stop now— we’re almost there.”

Her words drip sin and honey until I can’t think straight.

“Good. Now give me another set on the leg press machine,” she nods toward the weight room. “And then I’m *really* going to make you sweat.”

Physical therapy is usually the easiest part of my week. But I’m learning that nothing about Dr. Yasmín Rashidi is easy. Yas’ PT routine is brutal— And it’s only made harder by her proximity.

Hard.

Being in the same room as Yasmín makes every inch of me hard— I swear the woman causes full-body erections. My entire body is taut and tense. I’ve got my hard cock tucked into the waistband of my shorts, but it’s straining against confinement. Each whisper of her skin against mine is exquisite torture.

Yasmín is stronger than any painkiller, sharper than any scalpel.

She smells like violets, soap, and laundry detergent. It’s a sweet, fresh scent— clean and uniquely Yasmín. Her laugh, her sigh, even the way she hums to herself. Every sound Yas makes is intoxicating. She’s coursing through my veins like an addiction.

“Squats?” I follow her past rows of workout and rehab gear. “I can do those all day.”

Yasmín steps up to the power rack and adds weight plates to either side of the bar. She’s wearing a pair of workout tights and a cropped tee, her shiny black hair piled onto the top of her head in a haphazard bun. The snug

workout attire only flames the desperate arousal burning through my body.

“Don’t overdo it, Stone.” She tosses a warning look over her shoulder at me. “I didn’t bring my suture kit with me, so try not to break anything. Can’t have you skewing my stats as team doctor.”

There’s a flash of bravado in her dark eyes as Yasmín steps back to watch me step into the squat cage. Her silky hands and smooth voice are bad enough, but I’m convinced Yas is trying to get a rise out of me now. She’s picking her words purposefully, playing at the competitive athletic core in me.

It’s working.

The gym is quiet except for the rhythmic *clang* of the squat rack as I work my way through three sets. *The Nest* has a dedicated physiotherapy center, separate from the workout and training centers. The intensity of her gaze in the empty room might as well be another pair of weight plates as I work through an intense program. The first time I saw her eyes, I was convinced Yasmín was an Angel.

My opinion hasn’t changed.

“How was that, doc?” I set the bar back onto the rack with a smirk. “Seen enough, or should I start from the top?”

Cocky? Maybe. But even uninjured, half the guys on my team couldn’t do what I just did. They get by on size and natural talent. I’ve always had to work twice as hard for half as much recognition.

“It was alright,” Yasmín concedes with a small shrug. “I’ve seen better from you, though.”

She’s all business today and I like the challenge. It gets me fired up, motivated to push harder.

It’s also sexy as hell. Everything Yasmín does makes me want her more. I’m trying to ignore it— scrambling to keep a professional distance between us. Nothing good can come from getting mixed up with the team doc. But logic has no place in my feelings for her. Ignoring the chemistry between us is impossible.

I might as well be trying to skate with no blades.

“Bullshit, doc.” I grin, daring her to disagree. “My form was perfect and you know it.”

Yasmín’s eyes flash. Gold sparks light up her dark chocolate eyes and for a moment I can almost taste her mouth again. Despite what she may think, neither of our first two kisses was an accident.

The next one won't be either.

"It was good," Yasmín fires back. "For a guy with stitches in his head and both knees blown out."

Her tongue is as quick and sharp as her mind.

There is nothing sexier than a smart girl who isn't afraid to flaunt what she knows. Too often, women are conditioned into hiding who they really are. They learn to make themselves smaller as the men around them eat up all the room.

Yasmín is unapologetic about what she knows.

"Why don't you show me what it's supposed to look like, then?" I shoot back.

The smoldering heat in her eyes tells me that Yas is onto me. But she only squares her shoulders, determined not to break first.

"Fine," she huffs. "I thought I knew what stubbornness was. You've really blown the curve there too, Emerson."

Yasmín's words might be sharp, but her tone is anything but. Her body language is speaking loud and clear as she saunters over to take my place at the bar. She's enjoying this just as much as I am.

I move to adjust the weight, and Yas slaps my hand away.

"Yasmín," I shake my head. "You're demonstrating proper form, not training for the Stanley Cup. You don't have to kill yourself to impress me."

Yas rolls her eyes before planting her heels squarely into the floor. She lowers her body slowly, blowing out a slow exhale before straightening again. Her form is just as perfect as everything else she does. But it's the thick curve of her ass in those leggings that has me mesmerized.

I know she can see me watching her in the mirrors. Hell, she can probably feel them moving all over her.

"See something you like?" She steps away from the machine.

Her bottom lip is caught between her teeth when she meets my eyes again.

"I did." I take a step closer. "Please tell me you aren't giving demonstrations like that to anyone else."

Yasmín's smile falters.

"No one else has gotten banged up enough to forget how to do a squat," her voice is quiet.

The mood in the room has shifted from playful banter to something darker— more dangerous.

I lean in, closing the distance between our lips. This time, I don't give her a chance to think. I don't need to. Yasmín's body melts against mine, her arms wrapping around my neck as we pull each other closer.

Her hands move along my shoulders, massaging the muscles there. They trace the lines down to my arms, her touch exquisite. I moan against her mouth as I deepen our kiss, my tongue sliding against hers.

Yasmín gasps as my hands move down, cupping both cheeks of her ass and massaging her back. My mouth muffles her moan, but I feel it all the way down to my toes. She grinds against me, the heat of my rigid dick trapped between us.

Abruptly, she moves her hands to my chest and pushes me away.

"What's wrong?" I ask, frowning.

Yasmín blinks fast, trying to clear the emotion in her eyes.

"This. All of this, Emerson." She shakes her head. "It's all wrong. I'm your doctor. We're breaking a lot of rules here, and —"

A lock of dark hair comes loose from Yasmín's bun, falling in front of her face.

"We've got other doctors on staff. They can treat me," I point out.

She shakes her head again, harder this time.

"None of them are as good as I am," she raises her chin as if daring me to argue. "I don't trust you in their hands."

There's a tremor of emotion in her voice— a quiver of truth that I recognize immediately. This is more than lust. Whatever is happening between us, it's bigger than chemistry, more intense than attraction. I've never connected with someone like this. And I don't have to ask Yasmín to know she feels the same.

It's written all over her face now, burned into the dark depths of her big brown eyes.

"Hey? I know how much your career means, Yasmín. I won't let this affect your reputation." I brush my thumb across her trembling bottom lip. "If this comes out, I take the fall, alright?"

Yasmín is already shaking her head, her eyes fierce.

"Absolutely not. I won't let you throw yourself on a grenade when we're both pulling the pin. Rules, remember?" Her voice is hot. "You can take that macho bullshit and shove it, Stone."

Yasmín's chest is rising and falling rapidly as she pants. We lock eyes, and there's only a second of recognition before she's in my arms again. This

time she's the one kissing me for all she's worth. It's a desperate, hungry kiss that bruises my lips and has me aching for more.

Her legs wrap around my waist as she jumps me, her hands cool on both my cheeks. My hands are back on hers, my fingers digging into her plump backside to help hold her up.

"You an ass man, Emerson?" Her throaty whisper is almost enough to make me shoot in my shorts.

"I am now," I whisper back, before chasing the words with my lips.

The sound of a door closing across the gym sends ice water flooding into my veins. I force us apart, panting before setting Yas down gently on the closest weight bench. Then I back up, putting distance between us.

We both freeze, listening to see if we've been caught. I stand in the middle of the weight room for a long minute, listening to the sound of my own rapid-fire heartbeat as I wait to get benched, canned, or cussed out. In the end, nobody appears if anyone is coming. No one appears, but the close call has sobered us both.

"Rule one," I hold up my index finger. "No sneaking around at work."

Yas stands up from the bench.

"Agreed," she nods rapidly. "Rule two, if we go down, we go down together."

Her pupils are blown, her eyes so large that I couldn't look away if I tried. Nothing else exists in the world, except for her gorgeous gaze pulling me in. Like gravity, I can't help but fall.

"That can be arranged," I smirk, shamelessly eye fucking her.

Whatever she's about to say, it dies on her lips. I can see the wheels turning in her head.

"Rule three," I whisper, stepping closer. "We finish what we start. I've never given up on anything, Yasmin. You read my medical file, right? I don't quit. When everyone says stay down, I get back up. When the guys leave for the bar, I stay and do another round of drills. When they sleep in, I'm already on the ice."

She nods, biting her lip. I'm doing my best to lay it all bare—to scare her off. If she's going to get cold feet, I want it to be now. While my heart can still survive the impact.

"I don't have a file you can read, but I'm not a quitter, Emerson. I'm a fighter," she says.

Her face is so beautiful. Eyes full of fire, lips swollen from my kisses,

chin up and ready for another round.

“Good. I’m going to pick you up tonight at seven,” I say, turning to head out of the gym.

“Hey Emerson, we’ve still got thirty minutes of PT. You quitting on me?”

I turn back, closing the distance between us with the speed I usually reserve for the ice. She startles as I draw close, her lips parting, eyes half-lidded as I lean down into her face.

“Yasmín, if I stay another ten minutes, everyone is going to hear you screaming my name. If I stay another thirty, I’m going to be inside you. I’m going to go take the coldest shower in history and then ice my knees for tonight.”

Without waiting to hear her response, I spin around and stride out of the gym.

I’ve never felt so good leaving PT in my life.

Yasmín

EMERSON IS as maddening as he is captivating.

As much as I enjoy spending time with him, he's the most frustrating man I've ever met. Being near him makes me want to scream—in more ways than one. His hands are so strong that I can't think of much beyond how much I need to feel them. *Everywhere.*

“Seriously, Skylar? What kind of question is that?” I glare at her over the small mountain of clothes piled on top of my comforter. “No, I don't have a date-worthy dress. What part of *socially anxious wreck* did you miss?”

Sky looks up from her side-by-side comparison of two nearly identical black skirts.

“Yas— I'm going to need you to take a few deep breaths.” She demonstrates, sucking in a lungful of air and blowing it out slowly. “There you go. Listen, you know I love you, right? How many cups of coffee do you have in the morning? Whatever it is, cut it in half. I can feel you vibrating from here.”

Sky chuckles at her own hilarity before diving back into the contents of my closet.

“I switched to decaf months ago,” I admit with a laugh of my own. “This is all nerves and anticipation. Please tell me you can *bippity boppity boo* this pile of scrubs and sweats into a cute date night outfit.”

Skylar hums noncommittally.

“Miracles require at least twenty-four hours' notice.” Sky begins pulling shirts and sweaters from the center of the pile. “But I'll see what I can do. Did Emerson mention where you were going?”

I shake my head, color flooding my face at the memory.

“Not exactly. It was — we were making out in the gym. He just said he’d pick me up—” I glance at my phone. “In fifteen minutes. *Shit*, Sky. Maybe I should cancel. We can try again after the season.”

Skylar grabs my shoulders, stopping the train of my thoughts before it completely derails.

“No need to panic. If he didn’t have any suggestions, it won’t matter much anyway.” She shoves an armful of clothing into my hands. “You can’t go wrong with jeans. Where’s that red lipstick you stole from me in junior high? I know you’ve still got it in here somewhere.”

I groan, flopping back onto the bed.

“Look on the bright side,” Sky grins down at me, holding up a handful of pink lace. “It’s not laundry day, so you’ve got matching undies. Now—”

She pokes me in the side until we’re both giggling.

“Hand me those super-skinny jeans. Between the two of us, we can get them up and over your dump truck.”

I grimace, but nod.

The things we do for love.

THE NEST IS MORE than a stadium with a gym and some houses attached. It’s a full campus, complete with its own post office and fire station. The well-kept grounds are designed to have minimal impact on the local ecology. There are jogging trails, bike paths, sprawling parks, and art installations. The entire compound is open to the public, like a hockey-themed amusement park.

And at the center of it all is a massive open-air ice rink.

The early fall air is crisp, and I lean in close to Emerson as he walks us toward the ice. When he picked me up, Emerson assured me that the jeans were fine. But I’m suddenly rethinking my decision to let Sky squeeze me into the tightest pair I own.

“Oh no,” I breathe out. “Mistakes were made.”

There are a few skaters in the rink now. Mostly couples snuggling close together as they take slow spins around the perimeter. There are also a handful of teenagers and one family with identical toddlers in tow. It’s a

sweet, romantic scene that makes my heart ache.

“You said you’ve never skated before. I had to be your first,” Emerson moves around to take both my hands in his.

“I don’t have skates,” I cock my head at him.

Emerson is wearing jeans too. They’re faded and worn at the pockets, hugging his muscular frame like a lover. His long-sleeved button-down is a pale lavender that brings out the gold in his seafoam eyes. He smiles at me now I’m struck again by how kind his face is.

“Oh, don’t worry about that. I got some on the way,” Emerson turns to scan the crowd.

It takes him a few seconds to find who he’s looking for. Then—

“Yo, Sawyer!” Emerson waves. “Over here.”

Sawyer Lawson is the only Snowhawk without a single penalty to his name. I’ve known Sawyer almost as long as I’ve known Skyler. We were freshmen during his senior year, but *Captain America* was one of Coach Morgan’s all-stars.

He’s also a terrible liar.

“Emerson, I thought we were keeping this quiet,” I hiss, hiding my face in his shoulder as Sawyer jogs over.

“Cap won’t tell a soul.” Emerson drops a kiss onto the top of my head. “Weren’t you the one telling me that I’ve got to trust the team? Well, that’s what I’m doing.”

My heart kicks up into an erratic beat.

“I meant out on the ice, not with our love life,” I groan. “Have you ever seen him bluff at poker? His *tells* have tells.”

Emerson laughs as Sawyer walks up to us.

“Hey Yas, nice to see you again,” His blue eyes twinkle as he hands a pair of skates over to Emerson. “I promise— I won’t let this slip. I wouldn’t risk the best team doctor I’ve ever had.”

The most annoying thing about Sawyer is that it’s impossible to stay mad at him.

“Thanks, Cap. Alright, doc. Let’s get you laced up,” Emerson guides me to a bench and kneels in front of me before I can work up another reason why this is a bad idea.

The care and concern he takes making sure they fit just right warms my heart.

“How’d you know my size?” I watch Emerson lacing the ice skates with

practiced ease.

Sawyer looks between us.

“I asked Skylar. She’s always been the best poker player I know.”

His eyes twinkle with mischief. “Sky was always the best poker player we knew.”

I don’t know whether to groan or laugh. In the end, I do a little of each.

“Ugh,” I bury my face in my hands. “I had no idea. There will be no living with her after this.”

Emerson stands up, holding a hand out to help me to my unsteady feet.

“Come on, Yasmín. I promise I’ll be gentle.” If Sawyer’s eyes are alight with mischief, Emerson’s gaze is burning with it.

The skates feel out of place on my feet. Despite the custom fit, I can’t help but feel like I belong back on solid ground.

“Don’t let me fall, alright?” I whisper, leaning hard on Emerson as I try to find my balance on the blades.

“I promise, Yas.” Emerson’s eyes shimmer in the moonlight. “You’re safe with me.”

I nod, too focused on holding on for dear life to say much else.

Emerson’s hands are sure and steady as he guides us out onto the ice. He’s skating backward now, leading me out into the rink with him. His body is relaxed, his movements gentle.

“You’re doing great.” He smiles, and for a moment I’m worried the ice will melt under me. “Just walk for now. It’s like marching. One foot up, push off a bit. There you go.”

Emerson’s voice is soothing, almost hypnotic.

There’s a quiet peacefulness out here in the middle of a frozen pond. I’m lost to the world— nobody else exists at this moment.

No, that’s not true.

The other skaters, the people milling about the plaza, even Sawyer and the rest of the team fade away until only Emerson exists here with me. He captures all of my attention and demands all of my focus.

He’s so beautiful that it hurts.

Years of sports medicine have taught me a lot. The thought of Emerson playing hockey for the rest of his life— and what that will do to the man in front of me— is enough to choke me with emotion.

Maybe it makes me a hypocrite. I’ve seen Emerson’s chart. He’s fast enough to avoid getting hit— usually. But his most recent injuries are

serious. Head wounds are nothing to fuck with. How long can he continue playing such a rough sport before something bad happens?

I don't think I could take it.

"Good girl," Emerson encourages gently. "That's great."

His words bypass my ears and hit me straight in the gut. I can feel the heat creeping up my cheeks and down my spine, pooling like lava in my lower belly.

"This isn't so hard," I say with my best cheeky grin.

"Oh, so I can let go?" Emerson speeds up.

"Absolutely not," My eyes go wide as I reach forward, trying to snatch his hands before he can pull free. "Don't let go!"

I feel my balance waver, but he's right there. Emerson catches me as I pitch forward, crushing my face against his muscular chest. I laugh again, exhilaration and fear coursing through my veins.

"I've got you," Emerson murmurs. "You're safe with me, Yasmín."

I look up, and I'm lost.

There's something about the cool depths of Emerson's eyes that draws me in. I never doubt his sincerity. Emerson is the most serious man I've ever met, but there's a light and life in his eyes that I want to see every day for the rest of my life.

"Come on," Emerson says, tugging on my hands to separate us a bit. He smiles and it warms me from the inside out. "We've got to at least get you skating on your own two feet. I won't have you embarrassing me out there."

WE SKATE FOR HOURS.

Emerson glides along with an ease that I know I couldn't achieve in a million years. But by the end of the night, I can hold my own. My quads and glutes are burning by the time we skate back to the bench at the edge of the rink. It makes me feel a little better to know he's feeling it too.

"This is a hell of a workout. No wonder you guys all have such nice asses," I tease as Emerson unlaces my skates.

"Not half as nice as yours," Emerson's smile is wicked as he lets his eyes trace up my jeans.

His gaze meets mine and time stops.

“I don’t want tonight to be over,” I whisper.

His eyes are smoldering, but his smile is gentle.

“It doesn’t have to be,” Emerson helps me up, and it feels strange to be back on solid ground again. “But only if you’re sure.”

I know he means it. If I tell him I don’t want to do anything physical for a month, or six, or until we’re married — I have no doubt he’d be patient.

“I’m sure, Emerson. I’ve never felt like this before,” I confess.

I’m all out of patience for this man.

“Me either,” his smile widens. “So. not to be cliché but— Your place or mine?”

Emerson stretches up to his full height and excited anticipation bursts in my chest.

“I’ve got a roommate, so —”

“Mine it is,” Emerson offers me a hand. “Up to walking?”

I bite my bottom lip and consider the question. Of course I can, but the mischief in his eyes is intoxicating.

“What if I say no?” I ask coyly.

Without another word, Emerson scoops me up in his arms and tosses me over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes. I shriek with laughter as he does. It’s so effortless for him. He doesn’t even strain from the weight of my wriggling form.

“Alright, alright. All the blood is rushing to my head,” I shout, squirming on his shoulder.

His hand smacks my ass, just enough to sting. Then Emerson slings me around, shifting me onto his back. My legs wrap around his waist, my arms snug across his shoulders as he carries me piggyback.

“Better?” Emerson asks innocently.

I can feel the heat of his back pressing against my too-tight jeans. It was a nightmare to skate in them, but I didn’t mind the way Emerson couldn’t take his eyes off of me. Skylar is always going on about how my butt is my best feature. But Emerson looks at it like it’s the hottest ass he’s ever seen.

The seam of my skinny jeans is rubbing against him, pressing me into him until it’s impossible to think about anything but getting Emerson naked as fast as possible. The strong muscles in his back are warm against the aching peaks of my hard nipples.

His body feels so solid under my hands, so strong.

I want to see what that strength can do, what his intense focus will feel

like when he brings it to bear on me.

“Much,” I whisper against his ear, kissing it softly. “But I’ll be better once we’re in your bed.”

His pace quickens almost as much as my pulse as we cross the campus to his home.

“I’ve got to warn you, though,” I move to his other ear. “I’ve never done this before. I’m a virgin.”

I bury my face in his shoulder, unwilling to meet his eyes.

Emerson stops, setting me down. His fingers on my chin force my eyes up to his. His gentle smile melts my heart.

“Then we’ll go slow. We’ve got all night.”

Yasmín

BY THE TIME we reach the door of his place, I'm back in Emerson's arms.

Not slumped over a shoulder or piggyback. Emerson is holding me in his arms, my legs wrapped tightly around his waist while he drowns me in his sweet kisses.

Emerson's mouth is as hungry as mine. He devours me with soft kisses and savage bites. My heart is beating an erratic rhythm against him, my heated skin damp with perspiration.

Each time I think it can't get better, it does.

"You taste so sweet, Angel," Emerson purrs.

I moan, letting my head fall back, and his mouth traces the line of my throat down to my collarbone. Each kiss ends with a nip of his teeth that makes my entire body erupt in goosebumps.

I don't think I can take an entire night of this. I'm already on sensory overload, and Emerson isn't even touching me yet. Not *really* touching me. His hands are on my ass again, squeezing and massaging, but it's not where I want them.

One of his hands leaves for a moment, twisting the knob of the door. He carries us through, his lips greedily staying on my skin.

"Emerson," I whimper, unable to articulate what I'm feeling.

I'm not even sure of what I want, except for *more*.

If he keeps going I might explode, but if he stops I know I'll die.

Whatever he hears in my voice, it doesn't deter him. He pushes me back against the door to close it behind us. His hands slide up from my cheeks to the hem of my shirt, pulling it up to expose my bra.

“Too fast?” He asks.

Emerson’s voice is low and dangerous, scraping across my skin to send fresh shivers racing down my spine.

I shake my head, unable to form words. It isn’t enough of an answer for him. Emerson pulls away, letting me slide down his body. My shirt is still half on, hanging open.

“No, it’s ok. I’ll tell you if it isn’t,” I shake my head.

The threat of this ending— of Emerson not kissing me anymore— is enough to help me find the words.

“Tell me before it gets to be too much. I told you, we’ll go as slow as you want,” he says, infinite patience in his voice.

I don’t want to keep coming back to this. I can’t take it. So I put my palm flat on his stomach, sliding it up under his shirt to feel the tight muscles of his abs.

Then I slide it down the front of his jeans, wrapping around the base of his cock while I hold his eyes.

“Emerson, I need you,” I let all of my desperate want leach into my voice.

His mouth crashes back into mine with bruising force, but it isn’t enough. I can’t get enough of him, can’t get close enough to him. I squeeze him. The angle is wrong to stroke him, but I grip the thick heat there, thrilling at the weight of him. Emerson’s moan against my lips only makes me desperate to get his pants off.

I slip my hand up to work at his fly, but he stops me, ripping the tattered remnants of my shirt up and over my head. His mouth finds an exposed breast a moment later, and my hands fly up to grab his hair, bracing myself.

His lips are fire against my skin, his tongue tracing lines that make me see stars. My bra falls to the floor on top of my shirt as he spins us and moves towards the bed. I feel the edge of the mattress hit the backs of my knees, bending and laying me out on his bed, pulling him on top of me.

I don’t know whether I’m pulling him closer, harder against me, or just hanging on for dear life. I could orgasm just from the sweet attention he’s lavishing on my breasts.

“You’re stunning,” Emerson breathes, his breath on my nipple enough to make me whimper with pleasure. “An actual Angel.”

“I don’t feel very Angelic right now,” I gasp.

“A naughty Angel,” Emerson says, looking up at me as he wraps his mouth around my hard nipple, sucking it gently and rolling it across his

tongue.

I cry out, a sharp sound of pleasure that makes him pull back, leaving me on the edge. I try to tug him back, but he's so much stronger than me. Clearly, he's intent on savoring the moment no matter how desperate I am.

Emerson's mouth keeps working my skin, kissing his way down my body. I get a good hold of the fabric of his shirt and tug it up over his head as he slides down the bed.

I need more of him— his warmth, his skin, his kisses. The clothes are getting in the way and they *have* to go. He must feel the same because I feel him unbutton and unzip my jeans.

“Good thing I'm already lying down. I don't think I could get these off standing up without a crane,” I say.

Emerson chuckles, peeling my jeans down my body with no apparent struggle.

“If I had to cut them off, I would. It'd be a shame though, because they look incredible on you. I almost couldn't skate, I was so hard.”

I meet his eyes, feeling the intense heat of his gaze.

From anyone else, it would be a line.

“I would have let you,” I whimper, my voice hushed. “I would let you do anything you want. If you hadn't stopped us, I would have fucked you in the gym.”

His mouth plants a kiss on my hip bone that makes my back arch. I pound a fist against the bed, swearing as he trails his lips lower. The slight brush of his five o'clock shadow against my most sensitive skin is intoxicating.

“We can't have that,” Emerson croons. “That's against the rules. No fooling around at work, Yasmín. But after work? In the dark?”

His teeth sink into the lacy band of my panties and tugs them down. It's the single sexiest sight I've ever seen, and I swear I can feel myself dripping down my thighs.

“In the dark, you belong to me.”

Then his mouth is on my mound, his breath hot as he tastes my skin. I can't look away, but I want to hide, want to bury my face in my hands. No one has ever looked at me with that hunger. I'm about to get devoured, and the realization and anticipation make it even better.

“Please,” I beg. “Please. Please, Emerson.”

His mouth slides lower, threatening to brush against my clit. I buck my hips, trying to grind myself against him, but he moves with the motion.

Teasing me, not letting me soothe the ache throbbing between my thighs.

“Please what?” Emerson asks, his eyes flashing as he moves his mouth lower, turning to the side to kiss my inner thigh.

I want to scream. My fists twist his sheets, my breath coming rapidly as I squirm and writhe in his bed.

“You know what I want,” I pant.

“I want to hear you say it, doc,” Emerson says as he moves to my other thigh. “You’ve got such a sharp tongue. I want to hear what comes out of that pretty mouth when I’m making it filthy.”

Oh, fuck. Is it possible to come from just words?

“Fuck you,” I laugh once. A crazed, half-hysterical sound. “Fuck you and just *fuck me*, Emerson. Kiss my pussy, suck on my clit, finger me until I’m a puddle in your bed. Is that what you want to hear, you bastard?”

His mouth is on me before I’m halfway through, his tongue parting my lips like he’s splitting a seam in my jeans. I arch, hands moving from his sheets back to his hair. I was trying not to rip out fistfuls. Now I don’t give a fuck if he looks like he’s got the mange tomorrow, I need my hands on him.

“Good girl,” he says as he pulls back, looking up at me with a dripping chin.

“Don’t stop,” I hiss, tugging him back, squeezing his head tight between my thighs.

He dives back in and finally stops teasing. His tongue works up and down my entire pussy, starting at the bottom and dragging my wetness up to the top. Long, slow licks that end with a flick of his tongue against my clit.

I’m already on edge, so I’m not shocked when I come hard and fast.

The pleasure hits me like a punch to the gut. I’m doubling over, scrambling for purchase, doing half a sit-up as I writhe against him.

I *am* shocked when he doesn’t let up, doesn’t stop, and I feel myself chasing that first orgasm with another. The sensations are almost *too much*, my body so sensitive that it hurts. The pain melds into the pleasure though, mixing and blooming like ink in water.

“Holy fuck,” I say, collapsing back onto my back.

Emerson doesn’t waste any time. He stands, working his own jeans off, stripping down. I glance down my body, staring at the sight. He’s a perfect specimen. If I’d had him years ago, I would never have gotten a B in anatomy. I want to take my time and label each of his muscles.

With my tongue.

He has other ideas as he grabs one of my legs and pulls me to the edge of the bed. I spread them instinctively, wrapping them around his waist. Having his head between my legs was intoxicating and thrilling in equal measure. Having all of him between them is a little scarier than that, but no less addicting.

I want him— *all of him*— and I tell him so.

“I know you do, Angel,” he purrs. “I can still taste how much you want me. I can still see it glistening on these perfect puffy lips.”

His fingers spread me wide as he rubs the head of his cock against me. He drags it through my lips, wetting the tip with my own arousal. I shudder as he grinds it against my clit, before notching it at my entrance.

“Please,” I beg again. He raises an eyebrow at me, and the words tumble out of my mouth without any more prompting. “Please, fuck me, Emerson. Fuck my virgin pussy.”

He groans at my words, and I join him when his hips shift.

I don’t have any time to get lost in my thoughts because the sensations are overwhelming. My brain calmed after the first orgasm and shut down completely after the second. Now it’s melting, all of me is melting onto his cock.

“Fuck, you’re so tight Angel,” Emerson says. “So perfect. I’m not going to last long in this sweetness.”

His filthy words are a slap, but a good one. A sharp sting that makes me gasp as he presses into me more. I pull him in closer, dragging him onto me.

“I need more,” I whine.

I’ve never liked the sound of my own voice, but I barely recognize it now. It sounds like someone else begging, pleading, aching for him.

“Easy, girl. Fuck, you’re drawing me in. Can you feel that?” Emerson grunts, bracing himself with his elbows on either side of my head. “You’re milking me in, drawing me deeper.”

I do feel it. I can feel every vein and ridge of his cock as it stretches my tight inner walls. I can feel my body working his cock instinctively, eager for him.

“More,” I pant. “Please. Give me more of your cock, Emerson.”

He swears and shifts his hips more, driving into me with a force that makes me cry out. I can feel him seated fully into me, feel every inch of his body pressed against mine. Skin to skin, nothing but us.

I lock my ankles in the small of his back and pull him in tighter, digging

into his back with my nails and scratching him. I need him as close as possible. It's a feverish, wild thought. Purely primal.

Then he begins to move, his hips rising and falling in slow and steady thrusts that leave me gasping at the peak of each one. I feel like he's not just fucking my pussy, but my entire body. His mouth finds my throat again, sucking greedily as I roll my hips against him.

"Mine," he whispers against my skin. "My Angel. My doc. My Yasmín. Mine, mine, mine."

I can feel the urgency rising in his rhythm, the tempo growing faster. The room echoes with the slap of skin on skin as our bodies collide violently. I deepen my scratches, crying out as his teeth nip at my skin.

"Do it," I hiss. "Inside. Please, please, please."

I can't beg any better than that. The words won't come, my brain can't drag them to my tongue. My body begs instead though, my hips moving against his, my lips seeking his, kissing him with every ounce of passion I have.

"One more," Emerson says, his voice rough. Demanding. "Come for me again, Angel. I'm not going to stop until I feel you soaking my cock."

I cry out as one of his hands moves between us, rubbing a tight circle against my clit that immediately brings me crashing over an edge I didn't know I was standing on. This one hurts even more, but the ache is soothed by the fullness inside me. I bite down deep into the meat of his shoulder, the thick muscle muffling my scream as his hips still.

Emerson shudders, shooting his seed deep into me.

Time freezes as I ride the roughest, longest orgasm of my life. Each time I think it's ending, fading, his cock throbs inside of me and I'm hit with an aftershock that leaves me sobbing against him. The feelings are too much, too big for my body to contain, but he kisses me through each one.

Finally, minutes — hours? Days? Years? — later, Emerson collapses against me, his head on my breasts. I stroke his hair as I feel him inside me, slowly softening.

"Mine," Emerson presses a kiss against my skin.

"Yours," I whisper back, finally finding the word I've been searching for since I first saw him.

Emerson

I NEVER THOUGHT I'd be happy to be on medical leave.

The day after she gave herself to me, I woke up to Yasmín climbing on top of me. The next day, I woke her up with my mouth on her sweet cunt. It took us a full day just to leave my house. We ordered every meal, only eating once the hunger became too much to ignore.

Insatiable.

I recognize the fire that burns in Yasmín. It's the same relentless drive that fuels me, and she applies it to everything in her life. I knew that from the moment we met. But I didn't realize that it would make the sex so damn good.

Not just pleasurable and fun, but cathartic.

I've never cried after sex before. But with Yasmín, I found my cheeks wet before I even knew what was happening. She held me and kissed those tears, holding me late into the night.

This is more than lust. More than a fling. I was worried she might not be looking for commitment, but I can tell she feels the same way. My need for her grows by the hour.

Three days. We get three glorious days without the world interrupting. By Sunday evening, reality is creeping back in.

"I have to go to work tomorrow, Emerson. I can't stay in bed with you all day on a Monday," Yasmín sighs, sounding wistful.

I push her hair out of her face, looking deep into her dark eyes.

"You could call in sick," I offer.

She gives me a look, those gorgeous eyes flashing. I love how expressive

they are, even when they're burning a hole through me. I feel like an ant under a magnifying glass as she leans in.

"How many times have you called in sick, ever?" she asks, her voice deceptively soft.

I shrug, glancing away, but her finger on my chin turns my eyes back to hers.

"Never," I grumble.

"Same. So, no. I'm going to work tomorrow, Emerson." She sits up, reaching for her phone. "You need to—"

Yasmín stops, engrossed in whatever she sees on the screen. Whatever the message in her hand, I don't like the way she's gnawing anxiously at her lower lip. She looks up, dark eyes wide.

"Hey, no phones in bed. That's a new rule," I reach for it, but she twists, evading my grasp.

Yas sits all the way up, crossing her legs under her. There's concern written all over her face.

"Emerson," she blows out a breath. "I just got the results from your MRI and CAT Scans."

She sets the phone on the bed between us. The shorthand notes and liquid images might as well be written in hieroglyphics. But it doesn't take a medical prodigy to read the look on Yasmín's face.

I stiffen, bracing myself for the worst.

"Give it to me straight, Doc." I scoot closer until we're both sitting in the middle of the bed. "How bad is it?"

Her smile is reassuring. Yasmín brushes my cheek, and I press a kiss into her palm. Just being near her centers me.

"Your brain is fine. But take a look at this—" she pinches the screen, zooming in on a pale blue image of my head. "This is a linear fracture— a hairline break near the base of your skull."

Yas traces her fingertip along a fine spiderweb of lines on the screen.

"Hey," I shrug one shoulder. "Who knows how long that's been there? I'm fine, Yas—"

Yasmín shakes her head hard, cutting me off. She takes both of my hands in hers, squeezing until I'm looking into her eyes.

"You can't take another hit to the head, Emerson." She squares her shoulders. "You got away easy this time. Seizures, memory loss, cerebral contusions— the dangers of a traumatic head injury like this go on and on."

There's tight pain in Yasmín's voice. She isn't just handing out a diagnosis. The tears in her dark eyes give away the truth. Yas is telling me my career is over.

"One bad shot and it's all over. If you get back on the ice, you'll be a ticking time bomb, Emerson." I wonder if Yasmín knows that there are tears streaming down her face. "I don't know what I'd do if something happened to you."

Yasmín launches herself at me, wrapping me in a tight hug that says everything. When she settles next to me again, I blow out a long breath.

"What can I do?" Dread tightens my voice. "Tell me there's a plan."

Yasmín shoves a handful of hair off her face.

"Well, the biggest thing you need is *time*." Her voice is steady again, even if her lip trembles. "Given enough of it, you could completely recover. But even a small injury in the meantime could end your career— or worse."

I let her words sink in.

"I'm sorry, Emerson." Yas puts a hand on my chest.

I take a deep breath, trying to still my pounding heart.

"I am too. I'm not done, you know?" I look at her. "There's so much I still want to do. I want to win the Cup with this team. Seal a few more records. And now you're telling me that might all be over?"

Yas shakes her head again, harder. There's fire beneath her dark eyes, heat layered behind her tears.

"I can't make the decision for you, Emerson. But—" She jabs me in the chest. "I'm telling you that if you don't listen to your doctor— if you don't take the time to heal— you're putting your career, your team, and your *life* at risk."

Emotions churn through me— anger, disappointment, grief, fear.

"I don't suppose there's a chance you're being overly cautious, Doc?" I look up hopefully.

Her smile is understanding.

"I can get you a second opinion— send out for a few more doctors." She shrugs. "But any other physician would be obligated to bench you."

I swallow hard.

Then I lean forward and capture her lips in a desperate kiss. Yasmín's arms wind around my neck, her hands tangling in the short crop of my hair. She kisses me back, sweet and salty from our tears.

"Alright. I guess I'm riding the bench for the rest of the season." I blow

out a long breath. “Talk to me about specifics, Doc. Can I still practice? I think I’ll go crazy if I can’t.”

Yasmín grabs me in another fierce hug.

“Thank you,” she murmurs against my ear.

“For what?” I kiss the top of her head.

When she looks back up at me, Yas is smiling.

“For not being a stubborn asshole when it counts,” her laugh dissolves into a quiet sob. “I was so afraid that I’d lose you after I just found you. I thought— I was worried you’d choose the game you love.”

Her concern is a tangible thing. I feel the depth of Yasmín’s emotion in every word.

“Hey,” I kiss the tears from her cheeks. “Hockey is a game. A game I like a whole lot. But you’re more than a game, and I more than like you. You’re the woman I love, Yas. The life I want to build is with you.”

This time our kiss isn’t as gentle. It’s urgent, needy. I check with my fingers to make sure she’s wet, but I barely pull away before she’s straddling my lap and sinking down onto me.

We stay there, rocking back and forth with soft kisses and gentle words. I don’t know how long we make love like that, but I know it’s what we both need. There are no words, no games, no pretense. Only raw, passionate love.

“Take tomorrow off. Call in sick, for me?” I ask after we’re spent and tangled in each other.

“Anything you need,” she whispers. “We’ll come up with a plan, ok?”

“I already have one,” I say with a sigh. “I know exactly what I have to do. I just can’t bring myself to do it tomorrow. Let me hide here with you for one more day, before I have to face the team.”

She nods against my chest.

“I love you, Yasmín. My Angel,” I whisper.

“I love you too, Emerson,” she whispers back.

Yasmín

One Week later

IT'S a good thing Emerson is sitting next to me. I don't think my heart could take it if he were on the ice tonight.

The game between the Snowhawks and their in-state rival, the Dallas Mavericks, is bloody and brutal. I've already had to bench two players for the night because they won't stop bleeding no matter how much stiptic I apply.

I was worried Emerson would be resentful about sitting out the rest of the season. I know how much he loves this game— and this team. It means everything that he listened to my diagnosis and gave himself time to heal.

As the casualties mount, he gives my hand a squeeze.

"I've never said this before," He grins as I toss another wad of bloody gauze into the trashcan. "But I'm glad I'm not out there tonight."

I lean in and give his cheek a kiss. He turns to raise an eyebrow at me, eyes sparkling.

"Doc, please. Try to keep it in your pants. We're at work. Rule one, remember?"

I slug him in the shoulder as a savage hit on the boards in front of us breaks our eye contact. The crowd near us groans in unison as a player slides down the glass, but I feel relief as I note it isn't one of ours.

"Hey Doc. Em." Kai Mita shouts over the noise of the game, giving us a jaunty salute before skating off to hammer another Maverick. "You two make a cute couple."

He shouts over his shoulder before slipping between a group of Mavericks to disappear from view.

"I'm really glad I'm on Mita's team. That man is scary," Emerson chuckles, leaning against me.

He isn't wrong. Even if Kai is a little more mellow now that he's dating the new assistant manager Dakota.

"The team is going to need you a lot while you're recovering," I comment without looking back at Emerson. "Especially Parker."

I'm new to hockey, but even I can see the rookie forward is skating nervous.

Emerson grimaces as Parker lines up a shot. It's textbook perfection, but

the opposing goalie blocks it easily.

“He’s technically great, but he needs a lot of work,” Emerson says thoughtfully.

“Well, good thing he’s got you to work him, huh?” I scan the ice, trying to anticipate where the next injury will happen.

“Dakota, pull Parker in here. I need to coach him on that shot,” Emerson says, stepping away from me. I don’t want to let him go, but I know he needs to.

The slim redhead gives Emerson a nod and signals to the players. We’ve got an extra forward on the bench tonight, running a 13-5 split. Emerson and Parker both objected to the special treatment, but Kai was adamant it would be enough, that the defense would make up for it.

His word is good, but the Mavs are playing a lot more vicious than I think even Kai or Dakota anticipated. Like sharks, they can smell the blood in the water and they’re circling for a kill.

“Emerson, what’s up?” Parker climbs onto the bench, dripping sweat as he chugs some electrolytes.

Sofie Rivera, the new team photographer, apparates out of nowhere. Crisp bursts of light blind me for a moment as she fires off a dozen pictures of Parker.

“That shot is what’s up, Park,” Emerson claps him on the shoulder. “It’s clean. Textbook. Every eye in the arena was on you.”

Parker swells at the praise. I can practically see his chest inflating as he puffs it up. Sofie spins in an excited circle before continuing with her Parker photo shoot.

I smile, shaking my head.

“But that’s the problem. Goalie saw you coming a mile away.” Emerson lowers his voice, looking at Parker with that intense turquoise gaze. “Next time you’ve got every eye on you, kid, don’t think about the crowd. Think about the team. Dump the puck. In fact— don’t take another shot tonight.”

Parker’s face falls fast, his chest and ego deflating at record speed.

“But it’s my first game not in the minors, and —”

Beside them, Sofia lowers the camera wordlessly.

“ — and you want to win it, right? We’re all tied up with ten minutes left, Parker. Start passing, or we’ll find another replacement.”

Another vicious collision sends *both* players limping to either side. Emerson snatches Parker’s drink and shoves him back towards the ice.

“Think that’ll work?” I ask, stepping back next to Emerson. His arm goes around me casually, like we’ve been together for years. I lean into his warmth. Even though the arena is packed, it’s still a bit chilly.

Minutes tick by, both teams waging a grueling, physical war for control of the puck. I know Emerson heard me, but his intense focus makes him slow to respond. That’s alright.

I can be patient when I need to be.

“Hope so. It’s my first time coaching, but I see a lot of myself in that kid. I’m just telling him what I wish someone had told me.”

The crowd gasps, drawing both of us to look at the ice. Somehow, Parker has the puck on a breakaway. The kid *is* fast. I squeeze his hand as we watch Parker line up another shot.

“Come on, kid,” Emerson whispers.

I glance away from the ice, studying the man beside me instead. The game isn’t nearly as important as he is. I can see the hurt and longing in his face. He *wants* to be out there, and I know he will be again. I’ll have to stitch him up again someday, and that’s ok. Emerson’s passion is one of the reasons I love him. I couldn’t ever ask him to give up the career he loves for good.

“I love you, Emerson,” I lean in, whispering against his ear.

He twists away from the game, all of his focus on me. The passion he has for hockey pales in comparison to what he’s shown me in just a few days.

“I love you too, Angel.”

He grabs my face, pulling me in close for a kiss. Around us, the crowd erupts in a deafening roar. The buzzer ticks down, the game ending with us up a last-minute point.

Neither of us see it.

We’re too focused on this perfect moment.

Emerson doesn’t bother breaking the kiss, picking me up and spinning me around as everyone around us erupts in celebration.

“Emerson! Hey, Mr. Stone! Did you see that?!” Parker skates up, exuberant as a puppy.

Emerson doesn’t break our kiss, but I see him giving Parker a thumbs up out of the corner of my eye. I can’t help but giggle against his lips, shaking my head.

“You’re terrible,” I smack him in the chest.

“Hey, I’m not the one who decided we were going to miss the end of the game.”

I shrug, sliding down his body, enjoying the feel of his hard muscles even through our clothes.

“I needed you,” I tell him.

Simple, straightforward, and true.

“Good, because I always need you,” he replies. “Now, as much as I don’t want to let you go, you need to go stitch up the boys. Coach wants me in on the press conference too. Parker doesn’t have any media coaching, and I need to be there to rein him in.”

I give his hand another squeeze, leaning in close.

“I’m sorry. In case I never said it before, I’m sorry you got hurt. It should be you out there, leading the team to victory. It’s not fair, and I’m sorry.”

Emerson wraps his arms around me, pulling me back in.

“I’m not. I needed some sense knocked into me. If I hadn’t been forced to take a step back, I might not be here with you. This is where I want to be, Yasmín. With you.”

I hug him tight, blinking back tears.

“One more kiss for good luck?” He asks, smiling down at me.

I lean up, pulling his mouth down to mine. A sweet kiss that I end before either of us gets carried away.

“Go on. Time for us both to go to work.”

Emerson

One Month Later

“HOW WAS PRACTICE?” Yasmín asks by way of greeting.

“Parker is coming along. You should come watch.” I lean down to drop a kiss on her cheek. “You could hang with Sofia. She’s been at the ice a lot lately.”

I’m pretty sure the new photographer has a crush on the newest Snowhawk.

Yasmín sighs and leans back in her chair, one arm rising up to tangle in my hair.

“I would, if you boys didn’t keep me so busy.” She shakes her head. “I swear, every hockey player is made of bruises and breaks, only held together by medical tape and sheer force of will.”

Her voice is playful, but there’s a tinge of real exhaustion there. My hands move to her shoulders to massage them. Yas moans and leans back into me.

“Tell me you brought lunch,” she says, her eyes fluttering closed. “I don’t have time to go out. I’ve got a video call in five minutes.”

I take one hand off her shoulders to slide a plate in front of her. My Angel is picky about her sushi, but I make it a point to pick up some of her favorite rolls and nigiri a couple of times a week. I take one now and pop it into her mouth, my thumb lingering on the pillow of her bottom lip.

“Delicious. You’re a lifesaver, Emerson,” Yas says, relaxing back against my hand on her shoulder.

We pass minutes in relative silence as I feed her and ease the tension of the morning away.

“Oh no, Emersom —” Yasmín glances down at the empty plate in front of her. “You fed me everything. What are you going to have for lunch?”

I smile wickedly, sucking my fingers clean as I move to my knees in front of her chair.

Yasmín’s eyes go wide as I ruck her skirt up around her hips. She fills my senses as I lean in close and breathe in the scent of her arousal. Yas is always wet for me, but I never get tired of feeling it, seeing it.

“I’ve got everything I want to eat right here,” I purr as I move my mouth

against her.

“Emerson, I have a call. Don’t you dare —” her hissed admonition is cut off by the ringtone of her desktop. “Good afternoon, Doctor Rashidi here.”

Her voice becomes perfectly controlled, a flawless mask. I know she’s amazing at keeping herself cool and professional. It’s part of what makes this game so fun.

Last week, she teased me for hours in the gym. In clear violation of our own rules. I wasn’t about to let an opportunity for a little payback pass me by. I’d never actually do this in front of her peers, but I already checked the schedule. This is just a call with Sawyer.

My tongue parts the seam of her lips as I lick her from bottom to top. Her fists yank on my hair, but I don’t budge an inch. I’m exactly where I want to be.

“How soon until we’re calling you Dr. Stone, Yasmín?” Sawyer asks, amusement lacing his voice.

“Sawyer, please. We’re still taking our time. Emerson has a lot on his plate training Parker, and —”

I make her control slip as I suck her clit between my lips, swirling my tongue in a tight circle I know she loves. Her heels dig into the small of my back, but it just urges me on more.

“This’ll be a quick call. I’m just making sure you’ve got Erik on your radar. He’s been having some trouble lately, and I want you and Skyler to give him a once-over. He might be sitting on an injury, you know how taciturn he is.”

I slide a finger inside, curling it as I bring all my focus to bear on making Yasmín soak my face.

“I’m coming —” Yasmín gasps, squirming in her seat as her thighs threaten to give me another head injury. “I’m coming to understand that, yeah.”

She covers it beautifully, but I can tell I’m winning.

“Alright, well. Anything else I need to know?”

Yasmín shakes her head rapidly, her eyes cutting down to glare at me for a second.

“No, Sawyer. I’m going to go finish my lunch. See you later,” she says, ending the call before he can respond.

I look up at her, grinning as she drips off my chin.

“You bastard,” she laughs, affection and frustration warring in her voice.

“This is payback for last week, isn’t it?”

I stand, unzipping my fly and pulling my cock out as I do. In a flash I’ve got her on her back on her desk, papers spilling to the floor as I enter her.

“Do I need a reason to go down on my wife-to-be?” I ask, thrusting into her hard and fast.

Her cries of pleasure echo as I work myself into her. There’s no gentleness, no build-up. This is the fast, desperate way I need her.

“Fuck, I’m coming again,” Yasmín cries, her head hanging half off the desk, her nails digging into me even through my clothes.

Feeling her inner walls clamping down around my cock is enough to make me spill into her, my own cry muffled by her lips finding mine. The kiss is as sweet as the sex isn’t, and I lose myself in it. In her.

My Angel.

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About the Author

Regina Wade specializes in sizzling-hot happily-ever-afters. Her sweet and spicy quickies are packed with OTT alpha males and fun, feisty heroines. Regina is obsessed with dark chocolate, organic coffee, and her rescue hamster, Waffles.