



FOUR FIREMEN

Christmas

A REVERSE HAREM, PREGNANCY ROMANCE

AJME WILLIAMS

FOUR FIREMEN FOR CHRISTMAS

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Thanking Her Brother's Best Friends (Preview)

About the Author

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All characters are 18+ years of age and all sexual acts are consensual.

DESCRIPTION

Raise your hand if you've ever been rescued from a job search by four hunky firefighters...

Just me?

I guess that's this year's Christmas miracle...

I need a job—desperately. That's how I find myself in a coffee shop right before Christmas, frantically searching... Until a freaking *fire* breaks out, and my determined self is dragged out of the burning building by four irresistible firemen.

Suddenly the job doesn't seem as important as the four alpha males devoted to bringing me to safety.

Derek is young and... well let's say, drop dead freaking gorgeous. I think he *likes* the danger, or it seems to follow him around... But he would never leave a friend behind in the line of fire.

Alex is smart, quiet and thinks about his actions before he makes a move. But his calculated attitude makes me crazy... I want to sass my way into his carefully curated routine.

Samuel likes to win. He is constantly one-upping and besting his friends. And why he gets even more competitive when it comes to me. Not that I'm complaining.

Henry doesn't stop at being in charge... He wants to be in control. I can't help but respect him... and want him, despite our twenty-year age gap that should keep me away.

The four men come together to get me a job at their fire station. But where there's heat, there's fire... And the next thing I know, this sassy, sweet, curvy girl—*me*—is falling for all four firefighters...

And pregnant by one of them in time for Christmas...

EMMA

“I’m sorry, Emma.” Doc Warden hesitated. “We have to let you go.”

“Are you shitting me?” I slapped a hand over my mouth. “Sorry. Sorry. I didn’t mean to say that.”

But *shit*, really?

The old doctor sighed and leaned back in his seat, causing it to squeal. “We wanted to wait until after the holidays but it’s looking like we won’t reopen at all once we close for Christmas.”

What was I supposed to do now? Nodding numbly, I shook his hand and headed across the hallway and into the tiny cubicle where I’d been working for the last year.

I started to sit down but what was the point? Within minutes, I had everything I needed thrown into my purse and was out the door after saying goodbye to the one other person still in the office.

Coffee. I needed coffee, some loud music, and time by myself to sort this out. Surely there were other places out there in need of an administrative assistant. How hard could it be to find another job right before Christmas? I snorted and grumbled under my breath.

A couple approaching me looked at each other and crossed to the other side of the street.

Great, now I’m frightening people. *Way to go, Emma.*

Tightening my grip on my purse, I yanked open the door to my favorite coffee shop and stepped inside. Something about the smell of freshly ground coffee beans and steamed milk turned any bad day right side up. I closed my eyes and breathed it in.

“Hey, Emma, quit blocking the door.” Lacy, the barista who’s taken my order twice a week for the last year, doesn’t bother being polite. “Grab a seat and I’ll bring your coffee.”

“Thanks!” I forced my eyes open and weaved through the crowd until I reached the back of the building. Oh, man. Getting fired sucked but at least my favorite booth was open.

Lacy carried my piping hot caramel latte over and then rushed back to the counter.

Sipping the latte, I popped my earbuds in and cranked up the music until my phone flashed a warning that I was about to exceed the safety parameters.

Psh. I bobbed my head in time with the beat and opened up a job search screen on my browser.

The world narrowed to those three things. Coffee. Music. Money.

I frowned as I scrolled. Nothing local fit my job experience, and everything else was too far away.

Mom and Grandma needed me here. They were counting on me to help out with Christmas, even if both of them were too stubborn to say so. I emptied my cup and pushed it to the side of the table in case Lacy took mercy on me and refilled it without me asking.

The search was going nowhere, but I couldn’t stop until I’d exhausted all possibilities.

My eyes burned and I rubbed at them, trying to clear the haze from my vision. When that didn’t work, I blinked several times and looked up from my screen. My heart stopped. Smoke filled the coffee shop in a gray haze. I coughed as it wrapped around me. My lungs burned with every inhale, and I covered my mouth and nose with my shirt to try and block the smell.

Tears streamed from my eyes, and I coughed again when I tried to call out for Lacy.

I pulled an earbud out, and the screaming of the fire alarm assaulted my eardrum.

Shit. Shit. Double shit. I had to get out of here. “Is anyone there?” I screamed the question at the top of my lungs.

No one answered.

The entire shop was filled with smoke. I scrubbed a hand over my eyes and squinted. What was the protocol for a fire? Stop drop and roll? No. That was if I was *on* fire. I might consider myself smoking hot, but that was beside the point.

Good lord, was I delusional already? A burst of adrenaline-fueled laughter caught me by surprise. I dropped to my hands and knees and started crawling.

Smoke was supposed to be thinner closer to the ground. I remembered that from all the movies I’d watched.

They all lied. I couldn’t breathe any better down here. I raised my shirt over my nose again and took short, shallow breaths. My arm hooked around a chair leg, and I freaked out, thrashing and flinging my arm side to side. The metal burned like a bitch.

Sobbing into my shirt, I crawled another foot, and then another. Was I even going in the right direction? The thickening smoke kept me from seeing more than a few inches in front of my face. I waved a hand, hoping to clear some of it away but nothing changed.

My entire body ached. I’d scraped my knees on the floor, and breathing in the smoke scorched my throat. I coughed and it felt like my lungs tried to rip free from my ribs.

Where was the exit? I forced my arms and legs to move. “I won’t die here.”

Black danced around the edges of my vision. I shook my head but that made everything worse. Sick to my stomach and dizzy, I stopped moving and lowered my head closer to the floor. Was that a light?

I angled my head to the right and squinted. A flicker of yellow danced through the haze.

“Hello?” A disembodied voice called out from far away. “This is the Rocky Valley Fire Department. We’re here to help.”

Oh, firemen. I liked firemen. They were hot. I lifted my head and tried to call out, but all that emerged from my throat was a pitiful squeak.

“Derek, check the back. The barista is worried that one of her regulars didn’t get out.” A second, deeper voice boomed overhead. His tone was stern, the kind that demanded respect.

Footsteps thudded close to my head.

I lifted a hand. “Here.” My voice croaked so low I doubted he’d hear, but the steps paused.

“Got one, Henry.” The voice made me wish I could see his face.

It was probably a nice face to go with the velvet voice.

Hands gripped my shoulders and flipped me onto my back. When had I stopped crawling and dropped to my belly?

The yellow firefighter suit came into focus, followed by a large helmet that obscured his entire face. “I’m going to get you out of here.”

I tried my hardest to push to my feet, but my body disobeyed.

In a move I’d only ever seen in movies, he scooped me up into his arms and cradled me to his chest.

Hot damn. I was not a small woman, but he handled me like I weighed less than a bag of candy. Thank God he didn’t do that fireman carry thing I’d seen some of them do when rescuing an unconscious victim.

My skirt was *not* made for being slung over someone’s shoulder unless I wanted to give the entire town a view of my ass. Which I most certainly did not.

Unless it was my hunky firefighter. I'd let him look at my ass.

What was wrong with me? My thoughts scrambled this way and that way, and the harder I tried to pull them together the worse I felt.

"If I'd known you were going to show up, I would've worn my sexy red dress." I didn't know what I was saying, or why I'd tell him something like that. I blamed the smoke inhalation and the man's tight grip on my body.

A grip that increased as he dove through the smoke.

"I don't want to die," I whimpered. "I'm only twenty-three. I can't die now."

"You're not going to die." He sounded certain enough that I believed him. "You have to live long enough to show me that red dress."

I tried to think of an argument to that but came up empty-handed. Anyone who carried me out of a burning building deserved a chance to see my sexy red dress. I'd only worn it for one other man, and he hadn't appreciated it—or me.

One second, we were in the smoky building with me talking like a fool, and the next, we're out in the sunshine.

The bright light bombarded my eyes and I squeezed them shut. My arms curled around the man's neck as I clung onto him like he was my very own lifeline.

Heck, he might as well be. The man saved me from certain death.

Sounds rose from every side, and curiosity won out, peeling my eyes open. A crowd had gathered and pressed in from every side in a surge of morbid curiosity and worry.

My fireman carried me over to an ambulance and lowered me onto a gurney.

"You're safe now." He smiled at me through the clear face shield, and I swore amusement danced in his eyes when I kept holding on. "I have to go back and check on my buddies."

He was hot. I knew he would be. Warm brown eyes and lips built for kissing smiled at me. I unlocked my fingers one at a time and my hands fell to my sides.

A man in a blue uniform rushed over to my side. The fireman and the EMT conversed in a rapid-fire exchange that made no sense to my addled brain. I should know what they meant after working in a doctor's office for the last year, but my mind couldn't stop spinning long enough for words to sink in.

The EMT strapped a blood pressure cuff over my arm and slid an oxygen mask over my face.

I sucked in the oxygen and felt my head clearing. A cough seared through me, and I pulled the mask away.

Warm hands wrapped around mine and guided the mask back into place. "Keep that on. You took in a lot of smoke."

I looked up into clear blue eyes and my heart stuttered with more than smoke inhalation. Was being hot a requirement for working on a fire truck or ambulance? The EMT hovering over me released my hand and finished checking my blood pressure. "You inhaled a lot of smoke. Probably wouldn't be a bad idea to go to the hospital and get checked out."

I swung my legs off the side of the gurney and removed the oxygen mask. "I'm fine." The world spun and nausea rose in a wave. I clapped a hand over my mouth and leaned forward, praying I wouldn't puke on the cute man's shoes.

He patted my shoulder and handed me the oxygen mask. "Just a recommendation. Sit here for a few minutes and breathe. I'll check you again in a few minutes." He ducked down and met my eyes. "Don't run off, okay? You really do need that oxygen."

I nodded and placed the mask back over my mouth and nose. Pure oxygen smelled funny, but I made myself breathe deeply. I couldn't afford to go to the hospital. And honestly, I felt mostly fine.

Shouting voices pulled my attention back to the building. Smoke poured from the shattered windows. People in the

crowd covered their mouths, and I searched for the firefighters. Where were they? My fireman had said he was going back inside. My heart thudded painfully. Was he still inside? Were they trapped?

Four people in yellow firefighter suits rushed out of the coffee shop and the tightness in my chest eased to a tolerable level. I picked out my rescuer even before he removed his helmet. He was the tallest of the four, and his broad shoulders filled out his bulky suit in a way that only one other came close to matching.

The other three removed their helmets, and pure awe swept through me. Holy hotness. One sexy firefighter was good, but four? My shitty day took a wild turn as I sat there watching the men take control of the situation.

I'd heard two names while I was inside the shop. Derek and Henry. I was pretty sure my rescuer was Derek. Which one was Henry, and who were the other two? Derek and another man took over the fire hose and aimed it at the building. The two other men, both of whom looked to be in their forties, helped the police push the crowd back. I'd never seen anything more beautiful than the four of them working together to keep everyone safe. Their voices carried toward me, but I couldn't make out the words.

I had to meet them so I could thank them for coming in to save me. Derek carried me out, but they all put their lives on the line to enter the building. They all deserve a thank you.

Looking around for the EMT, I found him taking care of another woman with a burn on her arm. I winced for her. He'd be busy with her for a while, and I was not about to miss my chance to thank the man who'd saved my life. I ran a hand through my hair and straightened my skirt. My fingers caught on a snag and I jerked my head down. My skirt had a tear on my hip. An irrational surge of tears threatened to spill over. This was one of my favorite skirts.

I pushed the tears back down. I was alive. What did a skirt matter in the grand scheme of my life? I wished I had time to check my makeup, but I knew that was likely a lost cause. The

best I could hope for was that my face wasn't covered in streaks of tears and smoke.

Both were highly likely. Oh well. This was a once-in-a-lifetime situation, and I was not about to pass it up.

I strode toward the four men with a purposeful swing to my hips, and miraculously no one tried to stop me.

How could I give one of them my number?

DEREK

I aimed the hose at the coffee shop and watched the water arc through the air. Alex shouted behind me, but I ignored him and focused on the task. What a fucking rush. My blood surged, and I was pretty sure I could run a marathon with the adrenaline pumping through my body.

I'd never get tired of this. Not in a million years. The last two weeks as a probationary firefighter had passed so fast that I barely remembered each individual day.

But I remembered every single fire. This was my third one since joining the Rocky Valley Fire Department. The first two were abandoned structure fires. But this one... I looked over my shoulder at the crowd pressing in. This one was drawing a crowd.

"I thought you were fucking with me." I shouted at Alex and slapped a hand to his shoulder. "You said it would be busy at Christmas."

"Just wait." Alex tightened his stance and nodded toward the building. "Pay attention. You're missing the fire."

I rolled my eyes but did as he said. He wasn't my boss, but he'd been on the team for a few years, and I was supposed to listen to him.

He wasn't the one who pulled that hot brunette out of the building though. I smirked at the memory, and another shot of adrenaline caused my hands and legs to shake. I breathed deep and pushed the adrenaline aside so I could keep my focus.

“Too bad about the shop.” Alex leaned forward so I’d be able to hear him over the crowd and the rushing water. “They made great coffee.”

I wouldn’t know. I’d never stepped foot inside until today. I felt bad that they were losing their business, especially so close to Christmas. That had to hurt like a mother fucker.

Gray smoke poured into the sky as I continued pumping water into the building. We’d done the best we could inside, but Henry forced us out when it looked like the roof might cave. Not that I minded. No way I wanted to be inside with a collapsing roof. I loved being a firefighter, but I was here to save people, not get squished under the rubble. Geez. What a morbid thought.

I eased back on the hose and turned my mind back to the brunette. She was cute in the girl next door kind of way with brunette waves and dark brown eyes. I wished I’d been able to get her number before I had to leave her.

Henry would definitely have frowned on that. If he found out about it. But damn. The girl was hot, and she’d been adorable clinging to my neck and saying she didn’t want to die. And that comment about the red dress had shot straight to my dick.

What would she look like all cleaned up and dressed up? My imagination skipped straight to a vivid image of her curves.

She’d been grateful that I saved her. I didn’t need her gratitude but it helped. I’d gotten into firefighting to save people. And because chicks dig firefighters. Not that I had any trouble getting laid, but when you told women you ran into burning buildings for a living, they turned all soft.

Henry’s and Samuel’s voices rang out from behind me. The two older men had been on the team for years. They knew more about fires than I’d probably ever learn. That was why I wanted to be on their team.

“Set up that blockade behind the fire truck,” Henry bellowed.

I turned around and caught Alex's eye. "I think we're done here."

Alex frowned but nodded. "Yeah, we've covered as much as we can. Let's shut it down."

Within minutes, the water stopped, and we started rolling the hose back up into the truck.

"Hey, Alex. Get over here and help with this." Samuel waved Alex over to where he stood in front of the fire truck.

It didn't surprise me that Samuel wanted Alex. They'd known each other for years. I tried not to feel like the odd man out as they left me to roll the hose by myself. The crowd stopped watching the coffee shop and started trickling away in twos and threes. Now that the excitement was over, they didn't have any reason to linger.

The ambulances slammed their doors, and the EMT I'd left the girl with threw up a hand in a farewell wave. I raised my hand in an answering wave and grinned when I spotted my brunette making her way toward me.

Samuel, Henry, and Alex stepped in front of me, cutting off my view. Samuel slapped his gloved hands together and grinned. "Great job, Derek."

Henry looked over the coffee shop with a critical eye before he nodded once. "You boys did good. Nice save with the girl."

"Are you guys going to be here much longer?" A policeman in a blue uniform directed his question at Henry.

Henry shook his head. "Nah. We'll be out of your hair in a couple minutes. Get ready to move that barricade for us, yeah?"

The cop backed away while motioning for a few others to join him.

I had to slow their roll and give the girl time to reach us. I elbowed Alex and motioned at her. "Bet you I get her number before you do."

Alex followed my pointed stare and rolled his eyes. “She’s hot, but I’m not interested.”

Damn. I’d forgotten about him and his girl breaking up last week. He was strictly cut off from having any fun as he sulked.

“Come on, man. A good fuck would do wonders for that sulky attitude.” I elbowed him again. “Don’t be a wimp.” I regretted egging him on when he jerked upright and his nostrils flared. Sweat had tracked lines through the soot on his face and given him a manic look.

He walked away without a word, refusing to fall into any kind of argument or competition with me. He didn’t go far, and I caught him looking at the brunette when he thought I wasn’t watching him.

Aha. So, he was interested, but he didn’t want to admit it.

I smirked and considered pushing him further, but then Samuel grabbed the rolled hose from me and heaved it into the truck. The man was a beast, with arms nearly as big as my thighs. And that was saying something because I spend hours at the gym to shred my body into perfect form.

I had the kind of physique that made bodybuilders look like hams. And I was proud as fuck, which made Samuel’s actions burn through me.

Samuel matched my smirk and threw an arm around my neck. “You wouldn’t know what to do with a woman like that. Better leave her to the experienced men.”

“Yeah, sure, Grandpa.” I threw an elbow into his gut.

He dodged it and laughed off my attempt at insulting him. “Forty is the new twenty, man. I’m prime real estate.” He popped open the thick coat and threw it into the truck then flexed his arms.

Muscles popped out across his chest and shoulders, and I’d be lying if I didn’t admit that I was a little jealous of him when the brunette stopped dead in her tracks and her mouth fell open.

She looked delicious in her cute little skirt and burgundy top. Soot covered her face, making it hard to get a good look at her, but I'd seen enough to know I was interested. She shook her head and took another step.

Yeah, come on baby.

I took off my own coat and threw it on top of Samuel's. "You want to go right here, old man? I'll take you on." I peppered him with a few fake punches and bounced away on the balls of my feet.

Samuel rolled his head side to side, cracking the bones in his neck. "You're on. Time someone taught you a lesson." He went for a headlock, but I ducked under his arm and wrapped both arms around his waist.

He laughed and shoved a hand behind him working it beneath my armpit and ruining my advantage. I'd planned on throwing him over my head, but he wrapped his arm around mine and I felt my feet leave the pavement when he leaned forward.

"Can it, you two," Henry growled the words and slapped both of us on the shoulder. "Stop acting like horny teenagers. We're professionals out on a job. Act like it."

"Yes, sir." Samuel and I answered at the same time then grinned at each other like a couple of kids caught stealing candy.

Henry was right. People were watching us, and we had a reputation to uphold. Roughhousing at the station to blow off steam and get rid of the adrenaline was one thing.

I released Samuel and he thumped my back.

"We'll finish this later," Samuel said in a low whisper.

The woman stopped a few feet away and twisted her hands in front of her stomach. She had the kind of curves that turned me hard just looking at them. I didn't want her to leave, but I wanted to see that sweet ass. I'd felt it while carrying her out of the building and I wanted more.

“Hi.” Her voice was raspy and thick from the smoke inhalation, but she sounded sexy as hell.

I straightened and hooked my thumbs into my suspenders. “Hey. How are you doing? Did the EMTs check you out?”

She blushed and tucked a strand of that beautiful dark hair behind her ear. “Yeah. I’m fine. Little hoarse but...” She shrugged and chewed on her lip. A tiny diamond stud in the space above her upper lip flashed in the sunlight. Her pink lipstick was almost completely gone, but her plump lips begged to be kissed.

I darted around Samuel and stuck out my hand. “I’m Derek.”

“Emma.” She shook my hand and blushed deeper. “I wanted to thank you for saving me in there.” She waved over her shoulder as a shudder wracked her body.

“It was my pleasure. I’m glad you’re okay.” I meant every word. The fact that she turned me on had nothing to do with it. Even sooty and her voice deepened by smoke, I felt drawn to her.

Samuel and the others stood behind me in varying states of amused interest. I felt Samuel start to move around me, and I threw out a hand to block him.

Emma met each man’s eyes. A delicate sheen of tears caught on her lashes and she blinked. “Thank you all. You’re all heroes in my book.”

Well shit. Now she’d gone and made us all feel sappy. I stepped forward and took her hands in mine. I brought them up and tucked them beneath my chin. “You’re welcome, Emma.”

Her warm fingers curled around mine and she stared into my eyes. Her lips parted enough for her tongue to dart out and lick her lips.

“We need to go, Derek.” Henry’s usually gruff voice softened. “We’re all glad you’re okay, Emma.”

She didn't seem to know what to do with all of us looking at her, so I shifted closer and leaned down. "I shouldn't do this." I sighed and squeezed her fingers. "But can I have your number?"

Her eyes widened. "Yes." She laughed. "I was trying to figure out how to give it to you without sounding like a weirdo."

Really?

She tugged on her hands, and when I released them she pulled a scrap of paper from her pocket. "I stole a pen from the ambulance." Perfect white teeth worried her bottom lip. "I hope he didn't need it for anything."

"Well, if he needs to perform an emergency tracheotomy, I'm sure he'll manage without it." I laughed at her startled expression. "Sorry. Bit of firefighter/EMT humor."

"Oh." She smiled then and it brought out the deep brown of her eyes when she lifted her head. "Well. You have to go." She took a step back. "And I should get out of the way."

"Trust me, you're not in my way." I'd drag her into the fire truck and take her with me if I thought Henry would let me.

She walked backward, never taking her eyes off me except to look at Samuel, who stood leaning against the fire truck with all his muscles on display. Two could play that game. I winked at Emma and had the pleasure of watching her blush again.

Once she turned on her heel, I held her number up in my right hand and flicked it with my left. "Guess I win."

Samuel pushed off from the truck and swaggered over. I'd never seen him back down from a challenge, but I'd won this one fair and square.

"Nice of you to share with me." He eyed the paper, his eyes crinkling at the corners when he smiled.

"I'm not sharing." I shoved his hand away before he could grab the paper.

Samuel let out a whistle. “Better call her before I do. Because I don’t plan on waiting.”

EMMA

This was probably a terrible idea, but it was too late to back out now. I'd tossed and turned all night thinking about the fire and the firefighters I met yesterday. When I did sleep, I dreamed of the fire. A few times, I woke up in a cold sweat, certain that I was burning alive.

My heart hadn't raced this much since the last time I got laid... which was a lot longer ago than I wanted it to be.

I never really had trouble sleeping, so the fact that I couldn't get comfortable annoyed the shit out of me. I kept thinking about Derek.

Hot and bothered didn't even begin to describe how I'd felt lying there in my bed all alone. It had gotten so bad that I'd finally dragged out my little purple vibrator, hoping to get some relief. It helped for a while, but now that morning broke through and spilled sunlight across my little apartment, he was still on my mind.

I pulled the last batch of cookies from the oven and set them on a rack to cool. I couldn't shake the men from my head. Derek took up the most space, but that older firefighter had been impressive. I'd had a moment of insanity standing there watching him where I imagined myself climbing him like a tree and sinking onto his massive cock.

Of course, the cock was one of my own inventions since his suit covered him enough that I couldn't get even the slightest peek at their junk. I imagined they were all well-

endowed though. It had suited my dreams as I got off on my vibrator while thinking of them.

I'd thanked the firefighters yesterday, but that wasn't a personal enough touch. I wanted them to know I was very thankful to be alive. And if I happened to run into Derek again, well that was just fate then wasn't it. Hell. I had to stop thinking about him or I'd end up back in bed with my vibrator again. The thought teased me, and I took a step toward the bedroom. Who would know or care other than myself?

I grinned and then scrunched my nose when I spotted specks of flour dotting my shirt and shorts. Baking in my pajamas was a first and served as further proof that I had it bad for Derek. I hoped he'd call. It wouldn't be today. I knew better than that. Men like Derek didn't let themselves seem desperate. He'd wait at least a day.

Good God, I didn't think I could last much longer than that. Which was part of the reason I wanted to swing by the fire station. I didn't have anything else to do today other than go out and look for a job. Plus, Derek told me to stop by sometime. He said he'd "*show me the fire truck.*" I wasn't sure what that meant, but it sounded dirty. He definitely had a hose I'd like to polish.

Ugh. I was horny again and there's nothing left to distract me except to take a shower while I waited for the cookies to cool.

"Take a shower. Deliver cookies. Find a job." I ticked off each task on my fingers and headed into my bedroom. The rumpled covers begged for me to crawl back into bed and sleep the day away. My vibrator waited for me under the covers too. It wouldn't take long. I knew my body too well, what I liked and what got me off the fastest. I eyed the clock and groaned. Nope. I refused to give in and yanked open my closet door. What did a woman wear to a fire station?

I discarded the red dress immediately. I always saved it for special occasions. And even though I'd offered to wear it for Derek, I wasn't about to show up dressed like I wanted to fuck.

God knew I wanted him. My stomach clenched with a sudden need that soaked my panties. I needed a good lay in the worst way. Another dress caught my eye, and I considered it for a minute before I moved on to jeans and a cute sweater that flattered my figure. Those types of clothes were hard to come by, so I'd filled my closet with all that I found over the years.

An hour and a half later, after a shower and another less-than-satisfying, self-induced orgasm, I fluffed my hair and left the bedroom.

The kitchen smelled of chocolate chip cookies, and I closed my eyes and inhaled. Firefighters loved home-baked goods, right? I didn't give myself time to second guess it but grabbed the nearest travel container and layered the cookies inside. Once I'd snapped the lid on tight and tugged on my pink peacoat, it was time to go. I double-checked my pockets for my phone and wallet, then tucked the cookies under my arm and locked the door behind me.

The hallway was quiet, and I paused to look up and down the long corridor. It looked like always. The same beige carpet stretched in both directions. All the doors were closed and nothing seemed out of place. I frowned and shifted the container of cookies to my other hand. Where was Mrs. Rosenberg? She always left this time of the morning. Maybe she'd stayed overnight at her son's house.

I shrugged off the nervousness and forced my feet to move. The carpet muffled my steps until I reached the elevator and stepped inside. I loved the clop-clop of my boots and smiled at my distorted reflection in the shiny doors. A good pair of boots made a bad day better without fail.

The elevator jolted and my stomach pitched with the jerky movement. I cursed Mr. Thomas under my breath. The landlord had been promising to get the elevator checked out for months. I worried I'd get stuck in it one of these days, but I didn't like taking the stairs because the door often got stuck, which meant I had to climb back up until I found a door that would open. It wasn't ideal by any means, but it was what I could afford. And I liked the neighborhood.

A bell dinged and the elevator doors opened halfway before they stuck with barely enough room for me to squeeze through. Irritated at the inconvenience, I stopped when I was free of the elevator death trap and checked myself over.

If I was going to find a job today, I needed to make a good impression.

“Emma.” Mr. Thomas stuck his head out of his office door and waved at me. “Got a minute?”

“I’m in a bit of a rush.” I hefted the cookies as an excuse and tried to barge past him.

He moved faster than I thought possible and blocked me from the front door. “This won’t take long.”

I huffed and tried to calm the annoyance pinching my lips into a frown. What could possibly be so important today of all days?

“You never returned your letter.” He folded his arms over his chest and looked down at me.

Moments like this, I hated my petite stature. It made glaring extra difficult when the man stood a good foot taller than me. “What letter?”

“The one I sent you over a month ago. Everyone was supposed to fill out the form and drop it in my box. I never received yours.” He continued to look down his hooked nose at me.

Good grief. The man would make a perfect Scrooge. He was a decent landlord, but still, this was bordering on harassment.

I racked my brain for a memory of a letter. Cold washed down my spine as I remembered. “You mean the one about the temporary evacuation?”

“Please tell me you remember that the building is closing today.” He pinched the bridge of his nose. “I knew I should have sent out another letter.”

My mouth dropped open with a pop, and I quickly slammed it shut before he noticed.

Shit. I'd forgotten about the evacuation notice. I read the letter then tossed it aside. I knew I had plenty of time to figure things out. I'd forgotten all about it between work and getting ready for Christmas. "How long is it again?"

"This is a disaster." He groaned and finally looked at me again. "Three weeks. The building closes at noon today. No one in or out for the next three weeks."

"That's after Christmas." My heart pounded behind my ribs. I had to find a place to stay for the Christmas season? I didn't even have a job. How was I supposed to pay for a place to stay when most of my money went into Mr. Thomas's hands? "I paid for this month."

He scowled and resumed his crossed-arm stance. "Everyone still has to pay rent. That's the only way I can pay for this fumigation nonsense. You lot were the ones who demanded it. I told you I could handle it myself."

Right. Like mice and roaches running around in broad daylight were not a massive health problem. I'd seen three mice last week and even more roaches. If I'd seen that many, how many more were lurking, hidden away in the walls? I fought down a shudder, matched his scowl with one of my own, and straightened my spine. "We have every right to demand a safe and healthy living environment."

"Oh, save me the mumbo jumbo. As long as you know you can't come back here until after Christmas. Get whatever you need before noon today." He looked pointedly at the cookies in my hands.

I held them tight and lifted my chin. "I'll be back after I make this delivery. And you'd better not lock the door a minute before noon either, or I'll call the police to let me in."

They wouldn't do anything, but hopefully Mr. Thomas didn't know that.

His arms dropped to his sides, and he shifted his stance enough that I felt like I'd won the argument even though there was really nothing to argue about. "Noon, Emma. Not a

minute after.” He almost shook a finger at me but stopped with it still raised toward his own face.

Good. He remembered how I felt about him scolding me like a child. I was not his problem. I was a good tenant, and he was a mediocre landlord at best. We’d only asked for what we deserved. I could put up with living elsewhere for three weeks if it meant this place would be rodent and roach-free when I returned.

The last time I’d gone toe-to-toe with Mr. Thomas, it ended up with both of us furious. He’d refused to fix the leaky faucet in my bathroom, then blamed me when I refused to pay the extra on the water bill. He’d finally fixed the leak, but it put us at odds with each other. I tended to ignore him whenever I could and tolerate him the rest of the time. He left me alone unless absolutely necessary. I supposed I should be grateful that he’d bothered to remind me about the evacuation. “Thank you for the reminder.” There, I’d been graceful and grateful.

He lowered his hands to his hips and his tight frown eased. He looked like he might be about to say something else but changed his mind.

I plastered on a smile and stepped around him. “Have a merry Christmas, Mr. Thomas.”

He snorted from behind me, and I heard him walk back toward his office. The reality of the situation set in hard and fast. I had to find somewhere to live for the next three weeks. I could live with my grandmother. She had a place a few blocks away and was always asking why I didn’t visit more often. She’d love to have me over for Christmas.

But she also had a new boyfriend. I absolutely, under no circumstances, wanted to horn in on Grandma’s good time. She deserved to have time with her boyfriend, and I deserved not to have to listen to them in bed together. I loved Grandma, but I’d never be able to look her in the eye if I heard her having sex. We talked about everything. She was always the person I went to when I had questions. Grandma had been the one to have the sex talk with me when I turned thirteen. I’d

certainly told her enough about my sex life over the years that I didn't feel bothered by it anymore. Talking about it and hearing it through her paper-thin walls were two completely different things.

I palmed open the door and stepped out into the brisk December air. Sounds assaulted me from all sides. Car horns blared while men and women alike cursed the drivers in front and behind them. It was a riot of noise. I loved it.

Mr. Thomas's words rang in my ears. "*Noon, Emma.*"

I buttoned the top button on my peacoat and set out at a brisk walk.

A quick cookie delivery and then back here to get my clothes and other necessities. Easy. What could go wrong?

EMMA

The longer I walked, the more annoyed I felt. It bubbled and churned in my gut until I stopped outside the fire station and took several deep breaths. I wasn't nervous, even though my body claimed otherwise. I eyed the tall building with its red brick and the bay doors rolled back.

Three fire engines sat inside the building, and men wove back and forth between the vehicles. They all chatted and laughed together, reminding me of a family. My heart thumped with a burst of excitement, and I gripped the cookie container tight to my stomach.

What if they didn't like cookies? Ugh. Why did I do this to myself? They were men, and men liked cookies. I was letting my nerves control me, and that shit had to stop.

I took my time peering around the corner while trying to appear nonchalant instead of like some kind of weird creeper. I didn't see Derek, or the other young guy who'd been helping him yesterday. In fact, I didn't spot a single familiar face at all. Sweat dampened my palms and I dropped them one at a time, wiping them over my coat. I couldn't go in there and face a bunch of strangers who weren't there yesterday.

I pivoted on my heel, ready to turn and bolt, when a head of sandy hair caught my attention. He stood toward the back of the building, his eyes narrowed in concentrated focus. Henry. I remembered hearing his name yesterday and a breath of relief gusted out of me.

I dredged up my courage and lifted my head as I entered through the big bay door. Heads turned, and I felt several gazes land on me, but I never took my eyes off of Henry.

He looked my way. Our eyes locked onto each other, and it was like his blue eyes pulled me in without even trying.

I held up the cookies and shook them side to side. “I brought something to say thank you.”

“You didn’t have to do that.” He took the cookies from me and cracked open the lid. “But thank you.”

“It’s the least I could do. Since, you know, you all saved my life yesterday.” I didn’t know why I felt the need to remind him. “Cookies seemed like an appropriate way to show gratitude.”

Shut up, Emma. I scolded myself and forced my mouth to stop moving.

Henry took a step closer to me. His voice pitched low enough that I leaned closer to hear him. “You’re welcome, Emma.”

The smell of his cologne washed over me. And the way he said my name caused my knees to knock together. I licked my lips and tried to speak.

An alarm whooped, startling me backward so fast that I stumbled.

Henry grabbed my elbow, his grip firm but kind. “Careful.” He nodded once I regained my footing and released me. Then he was moving away. He set the cookies on a nearby desk. “Let’s go, guys.”

Derek and the other two I recognized ran out of a back room. They raced over to the fire truck on the end and began yanking on their suits.

I’d only ever seen this on TV, so I settled in to watch. It was fascinating seeing all this in real life. The firefighters were quiet as they listened to Henry shout instructions. He slapped one man on the back and pointed at the cab of the truck. “You’re driving today, Wells.”

Wells nodded and hopped into the front seat.

“Samuel, you’re with me. Derek, you and Alex hang back until I give the okay.” He eyed Derek for a long minute. “You wait.” He punctuated the words with pointed finger jabs toward Derek’s chest.

Derek’s jaw tightened, but he nodded. “Yes, sir.”

Something must have happened for Henry to say it like that. I remembered Derek coming to save me yesterday after receiving orders from Henry, so it wasn’t that. Derek glanced my way and winked before slinging his suspenders up over his shoulders and grabbing his coat. He jumped onto the back of the truck and moved out of sight.

It was all surreal and Henry managed the chaos with a controlled and even tone. Attraction skated through me, and I couldn’t look away from him and the way he ordered everyone around. He barked out orders at a dizzying speed, and I didn’t understand half of what he said. But that didn’t matter. It was *how* he spoke that turned my insides to mush.

Henry crossed the room and jerked his head toward me. “You have to go.”

How was his ordering me to leave even hot? I’d have to think that one over later, because he wasn’t about to let me hang around here much longer. I gave him a smile and inched toward the doors, taking my time while still following his demand.

I stopped in front of a giant billboard full of colorful papers. One in particular caught my eye, and I scanned the job offer in ten seconds flat. “Administrative Assistant Needed” the bold headline proclaimed. I ripped the flyer down and shoved it into my coat pocket alongside my phone and wallet.

The truck engine cranked, and Henry leaped up to join Derek and the others. I lifted my hand in a farewell wave and walked out onto the sidewalk to watch them leave. They were on their way to another fire, risking their lives for the sake of others. I couldn’t think of anything nobler than that.

“Well, now what?” I crossed my arms and hugged them to my belly. A plume of white clouded in front of my face when I exhaled. It was still early. I checked the time on my phone and started walking again. “Across the road and over the tracks, to Grandma’s house we go.” I sang my version of the song lyrics under my breath until her house appeared at the end of the block.

Grandma answered my knock with a wide grin and a crushing hug. At barely five feet tall, she came to my nose but had the wiry strength of a boa constrictor.

“Emma, what a surprise.” She latched onto my arm and dragged me into the house. “Shouldn’t you be at work today? Did you finally meet that man you were telling me about last week? The one with the drugs?”

Heat scorched over my cheeks, and I covered my face with both hands. “Please tell me you haven’t been saying that to your bingo buddies? You make it sound like he’s a drug dealer.”

“Well, isn’t he?” Her eyes twinkled with wild delight. “He comes to the doctor’s office with drugs and tries to get your doctor to buy them.”

“He’s a pharmaceutical representative.” I had clarified this point once before and she brushed me off.

Her laughter rang out, and she slapped the table with one bony hand. “Sit down and have some tea with me. You can explain it all again. After you tell me why you’re not at work.”

I tried to hide my wince, but Grandma caught it and stared me down until I sank into the chair and huffed. “I was fired.”

“Excuse me?” She poked at her ears. “I must need hearing aids. Because it sounded like you said you were fired.”

“I was, Grandma.” I traced the wood grain in her old kitchen table and slumped. Her heating unit kicked on, and I shucked my peacoat before I started sweating. “They’re closing the office.”

“Shit, honey. I’m sorry.” She poured tea into a pair of mismatched cups and spooned honey into each one. “What are

you going to do now?”

I remembered the flyer in my pocket and pulled it loose to look closer. “What do you think about this?”

She handed me a teacup and took the yellow paper to hold it up to the light. “Always did like firefighters. Got me one of their calendars one year. Best ten dollars I ever spent.” She pointed at the ten-year-old calendar hanging on the wall. A man holding a firehose in front of his bare crotch smiled from the picture.

“I don’t think this is that kind of job.” Oh, but what I wouldn’t give to see Derek in a pose like that one. The thought alone set my nerves on fire.

“You could always request one of them put out your fire.” She wiggled her eyebrows and laughed when I blushed. “So you lose your job and just happen to walk into the fire station and find this one waiting for you?”

“Not exactly.” I knew better than to lie to Grandma. She always knew when I fudged the truth even a little. “I was in the coffee shop yesterday when it caught fire.”

She gasped and sank into her chair. Warm hands grasped mine, her papery skin rustling with the friction.

I told her everything from the moment I’d been fired until I walked into her house. She listened and nudged my tea closer, insisting I drink every drop. It was bold and full of flavor, probably one of her own blends.

“I’m glad he found you.” Grandma leaned forward and lowered her voice to a conspiratorial whisper. “How did it feel to be carried out like a princess?”

“Amazing,” I admitted.

She laughed and poked my arm. “That’s my girl. What about the rest of them? Are they all as handsome as this Derek?”

“In different ways.” I described them to her, from Henry’s brooding gaze to Samuel’s amazing muscles. Even Alex’s

quietness had made an impression. I'd gotten all their names today while listening to Henry.

Her eyes widened with each admission, and she prodded me with more questions until I exhausted all my knowledge of the four firemen.

"You have to go back there." She pursed her lips. "You didn't get his number?"

I shook my head. "No. I thought about it." I lifted one shoulder in a shrug.

"You could always set your apartment on fire." That same twinkle of delight danced in her eyes. "Just a small one. Get their attention."

"Shit." I groaned and grabbed my phone. "I have to find a place to stay until after Christmas." I bemoaned my fate with a dramatic wail. "My whole apartment complex is shut down."

Grandma patted my hand one last time before she released it. "You can stay here. There's always room for you."

I knew she'd offer, but hearing her say the words warmed my heart. "I don't want to get in your way." I checked the time and leaped to my feet. "Fuck it all to hell."

"What?" Grandma looked around, her eyes wide with panic.

"It's past noon. Mr. Thomas was going to lock up at noon." I was screwed. Mr. Thomas meant what he said. He'd have locked the doors already, but I had to try and get inside. Maybe he'd have mercy on me. I slung my coat over my shoulders and hugged Grandma tight. "I'll talk to you later."

She followed me to the front door. "Be careful, honey. I'll see you tonight."

I hurried away, almost running in my haste to get home. My breaths came in panting bursts by the time I reached my building. The front door refused to budge no matter how hard I yanked on the handle. I pounded on the glass. "Mr. Thomas!"

No one answered, and when I cupped my hands around my eyes and peered through the darkened glass, there was no one

inside the building to let me in. Mr. Thomas's office sat empty, the lights off and the door closed.

I tried my key, hoping against hope that it would work, but the door remained locked thanks to a secondary master lock that I didn't own a key to. Fuckity, fuck, fuck.

I kicked the glass door, which did nothing except bruise my toes. I cursed what Grandma would call a blue streak and hobbled down the sidewalk. A few cars zipped up and down the road, but the early morning rush had dissipated, leaving the street quiet.

I sank onto the curb and tucked my knees to my chest. Tears welled in my eyes no matter how hard I tried to push them back down. I glared at the building over my shoulder. Was there any other way inside? My apartment had a fire escape, but the ladders were too high for me to reach from the ground. Maybe if I dragged a bunch of stuff from the alley into a heap, I could climb up. Was I really that desperate to get my clothes? Hell yes. Three weeks with nothing more than what I was wearing and the few things I kept at Grandma's was nowhere near enough. And now I didn't even have a job to buy more clothes. I'd have to stretch out my meager funds as long as possible. So much for helping Grandma and Mom with Christmas this year.

I groaned and dropped my head onto my knees. A cold wind stirred my hair and slid down the back of my neck. I shuddered and tightened my grip on my legs. I'd get up in a minute and walk back to Grandma's. At this point, I couldn't even justify calling an Uber for a ride.

An engine growled in the distance. Tires screeched and a horn blew long and loud. My head flew up. A fire truck careened around the corner going way too fast. Black marks appeared on the road as the tires spun and the backend spun out. It straightened on the narrow street.

I gulped down a scream as it barreled straight at me.

SAMUEL

“**S**top!” I shouted at the driver even as I was shoving my way to the edge of the truck closest to the sidewalk. Brakes screeched and the truck swerved but I didn’t give a shit. I leaped off the truck and raced forward.

Henry shouted behind me, but he could take a flying leap for all I cared. This had nothing to do with him unless he wanted in on the action. In which case, I might be persuaded. Derek and I already had a thing for Emma. I understood if Henry found her attractive too.

Emma looked up at me from her position on the curb. Her wide eyes were full of fear until the truck slowed to a stop behind me.

I had recognized Emma the instant we careened around that corner, and I spotted her sitting on the curb with her knees drawn up. She’s unforgettable. Those big brown eyes and that gorgeous body. I could fall into her and never come up for air. There was something about her that dragged me in.

She stood when I approached and brushed her hands across her ass. Probably just dusting debris from her clothes, but damn it made me want to offer to give her a hand. I’d do more than brush her ass. I’d haul her up against my throbbing cock and show her a damned good time. I couldn’t adjust myself without being obvious, so I left the beast alone for now.

“Are you okay?” I took her hands and held them between us. “Are you hurt?”

She shook her head, sending her brown curls cascading over her shoulders. She smelled like cinnamon and clove. The tantalizing aroma made me want to bury my nose in her throat and bite the curve of her shoulder.

God I was a mess for this woman. It made no sense, but I gave absolutely zero fucks. I was too old to care, except that at forty I was too old for her.

She blinked and her lips opened in an O as she took me in.

We'd just left a fire, so I knew I smelled like smoke and had soot lines across my face.

"I feel like I should be asking you that." She pulled a hand free of mine and brushed her fingertips over my cheek.

The touch electrified me. I wished she'd put that hand somewhere about three feet south. My dick jumped at the idea.

"I'm fine." I brushed off her concern and focused on being whatever Emma needed. "Why are you sitting out here like you lost your best friend?" Shit. She better not have literally just lost her best friend.

Her face crumpled and she melted into my arms in great, heaving sobs.

Fuck. I'm screwed. I wrapped my arms around her and rocked her side to side. "It's okay, sweetheart. You can tell me."

Sobs wracked her body. "It's stupid." She sniffled and tried to pull away.

"Nope. You're okay. Stay right here and tell me what's wrong. Anything that makes you cry like that is not nothing." My hands slid up and down her back. I tried not to enjoy it but that would've been like asking a fire not to burn while pumping it full of oxygen.

Derek and the rest of the guys stayed on the truck. I'd worried that Derek would interfere with my moment, but he's young and still terrified of a woman's tears.

That's one good thing about my age. I've been around long enough that tears stopped scaring me.

Emma mumbled into my jacket. “I lost my job and then I almost died.” Her sobs intensified.

“What can I do to help?” I used my knuckle to tip her face upward.

Her lips quivered and tears rolled down her cheeks.

I thumbed them away. “You can tell me.”

She attempted a smile, but it fell in an instant. “Unless you have a job and a place for me to live handy, there’s nothing you can do.”

“Let’s see what we can do.” I scooped her into my arms and turned toward the fire truck.

Derek and Henry watched me with rapt attention. Alex pretended like he didn’t care, but his nostrils flared in a tell-tale way that I’d learned meant he wanted to ask me something. He was young but not stupid. If anything, he thought too damned much.

Snow flurried in the air, sending a rush of cold down the back of my neck. I carried Emma onto the truck and settled her in my lap. She curled into me like a cat, her arms around my neck and her breasts against my chest.

The rest of the crew dropped into their positions in the jump seats. Henry’s jaw worked but his quiet attention stayed on Emma.

I smoothed a hand over her ribs and felt her sudden inhale, followed by the rush of her breath over my neck.

“Take us back to the fire station,” I ordered Wells.

Alex shifted his feet and leaned toward me. “It’s not safe to have her on here.”

I wasn’t about to give Emma up, and my glare quieted Alex before he said anything else. “It’s fine. I won’t let anything happen to her.”

Henry leaned back in his seat and crossed his arms over his chest. He watched me and Emma, his gaze roving over her. It

paused a few times over her delicious curves, and I caught him discreetly adjusting his cock beneath his suit.

A smirk pulled my lips into a wide grin. Emma wiggled in my lap and for the first time I was grateful for the thick firefighter suit that kept her from feeling my erection pressed into her ass.

Once we pulled into the bay, I stood and carried Emma off the truck.

She lifted her head and looked around, her eyes widening. Her tears dried up somewhere around Seventh Street, but she hadn't offered to let go of my neck.

"I was here earlier." She laughed and looked at Henry over her shoulder. "I brought you cookies. Oh, Samuel, you should put me down."

"Not yet." I wiggled my eyebrows and she blushed. "I'm enjoying this too much to let you go."

Henry kept pace beside us and motioned for me to take her to his office. He snatched up a container from the table as we passed and waved it at Emma. "Still got them."

"Seriously?" She grinned at Henry and her problems seemed to evaporate.

Henry nodded and slapped a hand onto my shoulder. "Put her down."

I wished I could tell him to fuck off, but he's the captain and I'm the lieutenant. I'm supposed to follow his orders. And I do. When we're on duty, I do everything he says because he's the best firefighter I know except for myself. But that didn't mean I had to let go of Emma immediately. I waited until we were in Henry's office to lower Emma's feet to the ground.

She shoved a hand into her pocket and pulled out a bright yellow paper. "Who can I talk to about a job?"

"What job?" I asked.

Henry took the paper from her and tossed it onto his desk. "The administrative assistant job I posted on the board last

week.”

“You’re hired.” I grabbed the paper and tore it in half. “When can you start?”

“Really?” Emma squealed and jumped up and down.

“Hold it.” Henry raised a hand to stop her, although he seemed reluctant to make those gorgeous tits stop bouncing. “I can’t hire someone right off the street. You have to be qualified. This job is rigorous and requires several skills that I don’t have time to teach.”

Emma’s lips turned down, her joyful demeanor fading. She nodded her understanding and smoothed both hands down her thighs. “Alright then. Would you like me to fill out an application, or can we jump straight to the interview?”

“Didn’t you hear me?” Henry yanked off his fire jacket and ran a hand over his stubbled jaw. “You need qualifications.”

“Yep. Heard you.” Emma planted her hands on the desk and lifted an arched brow in challenge. Her pink lips puckered. “I worked the last year as an administrative assistant at a small doctor’s office. Before that, I worked several hours a week in medical records at the hospital. I’ve worked in filing, data entry, and office administration. I can type, answer calls, triage, and field less important tasks with my eyes closed and one hand tied behind my back.”

Henry’s breath hitched, and I watched his right hand clench and release. It took me a second to realize what had triggered the sudden flex. The captain didn’t usually share any private details about his life, but I’d worked a few things out.

Emma’s mention of being tied had the man hot and bothered. Well, he’d have to get in line behind me and Derek.

It was an interesting thought. I’d never done anything like that, but I wasn’t opposed as long as the woman was willing.

Henry planted both palms on the desk and leaned toward Emma. She matched his posture, putting them nose to nose.

Tension filled Henry's small office space. The open blinds on the door gave everyone outside a perfect view of what was happening, but their voices were too low to carry. I considered closing the blinds but there was no reason.

It wasn't like Henry was going to fuck her right here in the office. Especially not with me around. If anyone was getting into Emma's panties today, it was going to be me. "Henry," I started.

He held up a hand in my direction and the implication was clear.

This was not my area, and I was supposed to shut the fuck up. My jaw hardened and I gritted my teeth to keep from dragging Emma back.

She never looked away from Henry. She didn't know it, but he took that look as a challenge to his authority. That was going to go over like a fucking lead balloon.

"Why did you leave your last job?" Henry asked.

Emma blinked. "They were downsizing. Which turned into them shutting down the entire office. They told me yesterday, which was why I was in the coffee shop when it caught fire."

"Why didn't you get out of the coffee shop? Did you want to die?" Henry's voice was quiet and tightly controlled. He leaned closer to Emma across the desk. "Why did my guys have to rescue you?"

"That's enough. Emma, you don't have to answer that." I grabbed Henry's shoulder and tried to pull him back. I was stronger than him, but he was a man on a mission.

"I was busy looking for another job. I had my earbuds up so loud I didn't hear the fire alarm. I need a job so I can help my grandma pay rent. Christmas is in three weeks. I don't want her struggling." Emma tipped her head to the side without breaking eye contact. "I'm not suicidal, and my mental health is excellent. It was a case of wrong place, wrong time." She licked her lips and raised one shoulder. "Or right place, right time depending on how you look at it."

I watched their stare-down with rabid fascination. No one treated Henry this way, but he was letting her get away with it.

Not just get away with it, he was enjoying it. This was shaping up to be an interesting day.

Emma waited for Henry to break the silence. I didn't know if he would since he might consider it submitting to her.

Henry never backed down. He always had to come out on top and be the one giving orders.

“Oh, come on Henry.” I shoved his shoulder to break his concentration. “Stop being a hard ass and give her the job.”

Emma pulled in a shuddering breath when I hopped onto the desk between them. Papers flew in every direction. Henry would make me regret it later, but I enjoyed being the one throwing him off his game right now.

His fingers gripped the edge of the desk, and his gaze heated as it took Emma in one last time before he turned away and blinked. A frown caused creases in his cheeks, and I followed his line of sight to the office door and the space beyond the blinds.

Derek and Alex stood outside the office. Both were pretending to clean up the fire truck, but the only progress they'd made was to stand there with rags in their hands.

They startled when Henry snapped his fingers and pointed, then got to work scrubbing the truck.

I grinned at Derek when he risked a glance back into the office a second later. He flipped me the bird and I reciprocated.

Derek was a cocky upstart who thought he needed to run headlong into every burning building. He'd learn, and it was up to me to teach him. I enjoyed putting him in his place every now and then.

“So, do I get the job?” Emma dropped her hands into her pockets and looked from Henry to me and back to Henry.

Having her here every day would be a blessing and a curse. I silently cursed Henry for taking so long to think it

over. If I interfered again, he'd say no on principle.

Emma waited just as quietly. She seemed sure of herself, but every now and then, her gaze flicked over to me like she needed reassurance. I remembered what she'd said when I asked what was wrong. She'd mentioned not having a place to live.

I opened my mouth to ask her about that when Henry stalked around the desk toward Emma.

She tipped her head back to meet his gaze.

He stopped with less than a foot separating them. "You'll be working with me every day. Right here in this office. Think you can handle that?"

HENRY

This was a mistake.

I stacked and restacked the same sheaf of papers and tapped them into obedience on the edge of my desk. The clock high on the wall across from me ticked down the time.

It was after eight-thirty and Emma hadn't arrived yet. I'd told her to be here at eight sharp. Her lack of punctuality annoyed the hell out of me.

How was I going to work with her when she couldn't even get here when I said?

I stood and closed the blinds on my door. Samuel, Alex, and Derek worked out in the exercise room to pass the time and keep in shape. Most days, I joined them. Not today.

Today I'd be training Emma on how to be my assistant. I'd let Samuel convince me to hire her yesterday. His attraction to her was a detriment.

Hell, *my* attraction to her could get me fired. I'd never work as a firefighter again, much less gain a supervisor rank, if I crossed that line.

The door banged open and Emma rushed in. Her purse slipped down her arm and her coat was buttoned up wrong. Curls hung around her face in a wild disarray. When I combined that with her gasping breaths, I assumed she'd been running.

A spurt of sympathy rushed in. I squashed it with a fierce hand and scowled. "You're late."

“I’m so sorry.” She turned and closed the door behind her, then darted around my desk.

I’d carved out a small space for a desk in the corner furthest away from me. I needed her out of reach.

Her purse thudded to the floor and fell over, spilling the contents toward me. Why did women carry so much with them? I’d never understood it. Makeup, tissues, a glasses case, and stuff I couldn’t begin to understand covered the floor.

“Shit,” Emma cursed then looked over at me. Her cheeks flushed and she dropped to her knees. With quick, darting movements, she swept everything into a pile. “I’m really sorry, Henry. I underestimated how long it would take me to get here from Grandma’s house.”

“You live with your grandmother?” I couldn’t look away from her. Her position on her knees was one of my favorites, and it sent a surge of heat through my entire body. “Oh, that’s right. You said you needed the job to help her with the rent.”

“It’s temporary.” A tube of lipstick rolled away from her grasping reach and disappeared under the edge of my desk. She crawled over the floor on her hands and knees and stuck her hand under the desk. With her face smushed against the desk and her ass in the air, it was all I could do to keep my seat. I’d never been more grateful for the wooden sides that made up the walls of the desk and forced her to bend like that.

She was a fucking angel sent to torment me. I adjusted my thickening cock and watched her ass wiggle back and forth as she searched for the lipstick. Her hand brushed over my foot, then grasped my ankle before she continued patting around on the floor.

“You don’t see it, do you?” She sat back and pushed her hair back from her face. “My lipstick,” she clarified when I lifted an eyebrow.

I rolled my chair back and peeked beneath the desk. It took some maneuvering to block my erection from her while I looked for the slim tube. She sat at eye level with my crotch

and didn't seem inclined to move. It would be so easy to unzip my fly and tell her to take me into her mouth.

She was my employee. Fuck if I'd cross that line. I didn't even know if she wanted anything to do with me. This woman already had Derek and Samuel salivating over her. My tastes were... questionable in most circles.

A woman as delicious as Emma would never be interested in the kind of kink that got me off.

I snatched up the tube of lipstick and held it out to her while scooting my ass back under the desk. For a split second, I imagined her beneath the desk sucking my cock.

"My grandma has this new boyfriend, you see." Emma pushed to her feet, flashing me a glimpse of her pink panties beneath her flowy skirt. It was the kind of skirt that bunched up perfectly in my hands and would frame her ass in excellent detail.

Blood rushed through my ears and into my groin. The sudden surge forced me to pinch my leg to keep a groan at bay.

"They were up most of the night, which kept me up most of the night." She chuckled and blushed at the same time.

While I didn't want to hear her story, I couldn't escape the sound of her voice. It flowed in a sweet melody, the cadence rich and smooth. I wondered what it would sound like lifted in ecstasy as she came. I was strong enough to resist her. I told myself that over and over again while watching her lips move.

"I never thought Grandma would love anyone else after Gramps. And maybe she doesn't love Neil, but she's happy." She shrugged and scooped her purse into her arms. "You do *not* want to know how happy Neil makes her. Not that Grandma shouldn't have fun." She shuddered. "But there are some things I'd rather not hear, and Grandma having sex is one of them. I do *not* want to stay there and have to listen to that every night."

Fuck an angel and call me the devil. I wanted her even more now. "And that's why you were late?" Now that she'd

started talking, I didn't want her to stop. Her honeyed tone gave me a chance to sink into a delicious daydream.

Emma would be the perfect star to my show. I'd never fucked anyone in my office before. I imagined standing and walking to the door. Flipping the lock.

She'd look up at me with those chocolate eyes wide and innocent. I'd pull her to her feet and strip her naked with such slowness that she'd be dripping wet. I'd make her wait while I drove her to the point of frenzied pleasure. By the time I touched her pussy, she'd melt around me. I'd take my time with her, take things slow so I didn't scare her.

A woman like Emma deserved that. I knew how to tease until she'd climax so hard, she wouldn't be able to stand.

My annoyance at her lack of punctuality turned into something else. Her stories about her grandma charmed me.

I imagined her laying there in bed, unable to sleep, and wishing for me to climb on top of her.

Maybe she dreamed of Derek or Samuel instead. She'd been enamored with Samuel yesterday, and Derek the day before. Had she laid there and fingered herself? Did she have a dildo? I imagined her pleasuring herself all alone, and it drove me wild with the need to give her a true release.

"If I hear Grandma say Neil's name one more time, I might pull my hair out." Emma grinned and crossed her arms on the desk. She leaned forward and her tits rested on her forearms.

God, I wanted to bury my face between them. My attraction to her was insane. I read her application last night and found out I was twenty years older than her. As far as firsts went, Emma was ticking off a lot of boxes.

What would someone her age think of getting tied up in bed and pleased until they couldn't remember their name? If she'd seen that one movie, she might know what to expect, but it wasn't exactly a question brought up at work. It wasn't the kind of question you asked for a long, long time.

"I won't be late again." Her sweet voice drove my fantasy deeper.

My cock throbbed painfully as I imagined wrapping my belt around her wrists and hooking it over the coat rack behind me. The height was perfect to stretch her taut. She deserved a good spanking for disobeying me. Her punishment for being late would get us both off. I'd only do it if she liked it. I'd never forced my kink on anyone in my life and I wouldn't start now. But damn if her ass wouldn't look perfect covered in my handprints.

Then, when she was good and ready, I'd feed her my cock and let her come all over me. My cock was so full and heavy that I prayed the alarm didn't ring anytime soon. I'd never get to the truck in time with its weight holding me to the chair. Oh fuck. That was another one I'd love to explore. Me sitting in the chair while Emma rode my cock. Those glorious tits in my face while I pinch and squeeze her nipples.

She leaned further forward. The move tugged her shirt down, showing me a good deal of cleavage and even the lacy curve of a bright red bra. "I'm an excellent employee, Henry. I'll prove that to you. Give me a chance. Don't fire me for being late this one time." Worry laced her tone. Her eyebrows knitted together. "Please let me keep this job. You won't regret it."

Good God. If she didn't stop apologizing, I was going to forget all the reasons why I shouldn't bend her over the desk right now. I'd show her exactly what I thought of her saying please. One night with me, and she'd learn that *please* had a whole new meaning.

"Get to work, Emma." I barked the order at her. My voice made it clear I expected her to obey without question. I had to get her to stop tormenting me.

Her mouth opened with a pop and hurt ran across her face. She jerked back and her crossed arms slammed over her stomach. And still, I couldn't shake the image of her bare body moving beneath mine.

If anything, her closed-off posture made it worse.

"You don't have to talk to me like that." The hurt I'd seen in her face bled over into her voice. Beneath that was a layer

of steel. She stood and her hands fell to her sides.

I didn't dare stand up. Not with my cock aching and bulging larger with every passing second. "No?" I laced my fingers together and set them on top of the desk. "You think you have a choice in how I talk to you?"

"Yes." Without a moment of hesitation, she marched over to my desk and put her palms flat near mine. Her tits swung forward, right in my fucking line of sight.

The damned woman was going to kill me, and she didn't have a clue. Her back-talking only made things worse. I thought of a dozen things I'd rather her mouth do. Those perfect pink lips would look amazing wrapped around my cock.

Her husky voice locked my attention on her lips. "I need this job, but that doesn't mean I'll let you be mean to me."

"I'm not being mean to you." I flashed a dark smile. "You have no idea what being mean is."

"I know you're being an arrogant asshole. I apologize and tell you I'm sorry and I'll never do it again, and you sit there staring at me like I'm worse than the ashes on the bottom of your shoes." She leaned even closer. Much closer, and I was sure she'd topple right onto my desk.

Right where I'd put her if I had the chance. Why couldn't I get her out of my head? I'd never been this hooked on someone after two days and one conversation.

Her words registered and I leaned into her space. "That wasn't what I was doing. Don't think for a second that you know what I'm thinking."

I kept pushing. It was the only way to get her to back the hell off. Her constant needling was going to get us both in trouble. I had control of myself, but there was a certain point that I knew I was approaching.

If she kept challenging me, it would push me over the edge.

“So, what were you thinking then? If it wasn’t about firing me, what was it?” Her brown eyes held no realization of my intense attraction to her. She looked me over, her gaze assessing. Her breathing deepened.

That’s when I knew she liked standing up to me. She might be meek in other ways, but something about me turned her into this. Almost like she wanted me to turn on my dominant side and control her.

No. I was reading too much into the situation. I was taking what I wanted and making it fit the situation.

My knuckles whitened from the tension of holding back.

“You know, I thought yesterday that you liked me.” She kept her position in front of me without wavering. “Was I wrong about that?”

Enough. I stood with exaggerated slowness.

Her eyes held mine for several seconds, then like a magnet pulled them downward, she looked lower.

“Damn it, Emma.” I palmed the desk, putting my hands between hers and leaning in so close our breaths mingled. “I’m trying my best not to fuck you right here where everyone can hear you scream my name as you come.”

Her fingertips twitched on the desk and her thumbs brushed over my pinkies. “Henry?”

That breathless whisper pushed me over the edge. I held onto my control by the slimmest thread. My voice turned guttural, the harshness surprising even me. “Get out of my office. You’re not ready for the things I want to do to you.”

EMMA

What the actual fuck happened? I blinked at Henry and tried to formulate a coherent response, but my mind conjured all sorts of naughty images instead. His bulging erection scrambled my thoughts. So, he *was* attracted to me. Good to know.

Henry's fearsome scowl warned me away. He wrenched his hands back when I skated my thumbs over his hands again.

Should I leave or should I see if he really meant what he'd said?

"I'm not fucking around." His voice growled low and dark.

Damn if it didn't turn me on. I pushed, even though I knew I should back off. "No? I thought that was exactly what you wanted to do." I shifted my weight forward, pushing my tits between my arms in obvious flirtation.

His jaw sawed side to side. "Fuck me." His voice barely rose above a whisper.

"I'd love to." I realized I meant it the instant the words left my mouth.

Henry snapped his head toward me and raised one hand in a stop motion when I moved. He backed toward the door, then yanked it open. "Alex. Derek. Get in here." He watched me every second, his gaze taking me in from head to toe. He left the door open and strode back to his chair. Sitting in a smooth motion, he hid his erection beneath the desk.

An ache settled low in my belly and started a throbbing in my core. He looked at me like he wanted to devour me. I'd never had anyone look at me like that before.

Shaggy blond hair stood on end when he scrubbed both hands over his head and down his face. For a man who always looked like he had his shit together, he was coming undone.

Because of me? Now that was the turn-on of a lifetime. Imagine me turning on a man like Henry? It was almost unthinkable.

But that look in his eyes promised pure devastation if I let him between my legs. I soaked my panties thinking about what he'd do to me.

Derek and Alex filed into the room. Derek grinned at me, flashing a dimple along with a wink. Alex held himself back and his more reserved attitude settled the tension in the room.

"What's up, boss?" Derek dropped into the nearest chair and spread his legs out in a way that would be vulgar on a woman but made him look badass. It also brought attention to his dick, which was outlined nicely in his athletic pants.

Hot damn. My mouth watered at the sight of that deliciousness all wrapped up.

Henry motioned at me with one hand. I was sure he meant for the move to be casual, but his hand twitched at the last second and ruined the effect. "Emma needs a place to stay until after Christmas. You two still need a roommate?"

"Yes," Derek answered so fast he almost cut Henry off.

Alex's quiet reluctance cut through the room. He glanced at me but didn't let the look linger.

Henry motioned between the three of us. "She needs someplace closer to the station. Let her stay with you until her apartment opens up again."

I worked the dryness from my throat and tried not to let my eager anticipation show. I never imagined that when I showed up to work this morning that I'd get to be roomies with not one but two hunks.

Alex frowned but didn't argue. He had an understated handsomeness with his square jaw and carefully groomed black hair. He was thinner than Derek, but he emanated strength the same way Henry did. Derek and Samuel were the obvious gym junkies, with their enormous muscles. I appreciated all their bodies for different reasons.

"Awesome." Derek tapped his feet on the floor. "You want me to take you over there when our shift ends?"

"Yeah. That would be great." Nerves tightened across my shoulders and made my voice squeaky. I'd never shared an apartment with a guy before, much less with two. What if they were slob?

Alex palmed his cheek but didn't look too put out by the idea of me staying with them.

"Great. Now get back to work." Henry's expression remained calm, but I sensed the sexual frustration lingering between us.

Alex left first, followed by Derek, who paused at the door. "Looking forward to seeing you later." He winked again.

"Close the door," Henry barked out.

Derek's laughter rang out as he closed the door with a slam that shook the blinds. The closed blinds. I was alone with Henry again in a room where no one could see us but could walk in at any second.

I almost reached over and locked the door, just to see what Henry would do. I was too damned curious about this man.

"Stop looking at me like that." He pushed to his feet and walked around the desk until he stood by my side. Heat emanated from his body in pulsing waves that wrapped around me. A hard look crossed over his face as he stared at me. "Fuck Derek. Or Alex. They'll take good care of you."

"Henry—"

He shook his head. "No, Emma. Stop saying my name like you want to fuck me. You don't. Trust me." When I opened my mouth to complain, he framed my face in his calloused

hands and brought me around so we stood face-to-face. “Don’t push me. You think I’m a controlling asshole here, you have no idea what I’d make you do in the bedroom.”

I couldn’t stop myself to save my life. I raised up on my tiptoes and brushed my lips over his. “I like it when you get all annoyed and pissed off,” I whispered against his lips. “It turns me on.”

His lips slanted over mine in a hungry kiss that assaulted every sense. I smelled the pine and citrus of his cologne and felt the rough texture of his hands smoothing down my neck.

I groaned into his mouth when he slid his tongue against mine. A desperate need to feel him drove my hands between us. I made it as far as his belt before he wrenched away from me.

“We can’t.” He palmed my shoulders, his fingers digging into my skin. Ragged need filled his eyes.

I kept my hold on his belt and pulled. Somehow, we’d turned so my ass was pressed against his desk and I slid onto the hard wood while dragging Henry toward me.

Indecision warred in his expression, and he glanced at the door.

“Tell me what you want me to do, Henry.” I purred his name and wrapped my legs around his thighs. “What do you need?”

His hands left my shoulders and moved to my hips. He gathered up my skirt in bunches and hiked it up until he could see every inch of my panties. “God you’re gorgeous.” One hand held my skirt and the other fisted a handful of my hair. He pulled my head back, exposing my throat.

I couldn’t see him from his angle, but I felt him move between my legs. Thick fingers pushed my panties aside and he thumbed my clit.

“If I was a good man, this would be enough. You want this, don’t you?” He stroked me then cupped my sex. “You’re wet for me, Emma.” One finger slid inside, and I almost

fainted from the suddenness of it. “But once you know me, once you understand what I want...”

My whimper stopped him cold. He froze with his finger still deep in my pussy.

“Don’t stop.” I arched toward him.

He abandoned me in the middle of our opening act. In less time than it took for me to blink, he’d taken his finger out of me and stepped back while pulling my skirt back into place.

Cold fury carved a line between his eyebrows. He lifted his hand, his index finger gleaming with my juices, and showed it to me. The more he denied me and told me no, the more I wanted him. I watched him stick his finger in his mouth and lick it clean. “I’m no good for you.” He jerked his head toward the door. “Derek or Alex. Take your pick. Not me.”

The shrill screech of the alarm blared and cut off anything else he might’ve said.

Derek slammed the door open. “Hey, sorry, Emma. I won’t get to walk you over to the apartment.” He tossed a set of keys onto the desk beside me. “You can let yourself in. Check the place out. The bedroom on the right is available.” He nodded toward Henry, not seeming to notice that things were definitely not normal in the office. “Here’s the address. Make yourself at home.”

I took the paper from his outstretched hand, and he took off, racing toward the fire truck.

Henry started past me, his mouth set in a grim line.

“Henry?” There was a good chance he’d ignore me, but I waited for him to turn around before I said, “I’ll be thinking of you tonight when I come in the shower.”

A muscle leaped in his jaw and his nostrils flared, but he walked out of the office and stepped into his gear without saying a word.

He hadn’t shown me what I should do while they were gone. After straightening my skirt and making sure my hair wasn’t all over the place, I left the office. The firefighters ran

in every direction. It appeared to be chaos, but I knew there must be some sort of order to the whole thing.

Henry pointed from his position at the back of the truck. “Derek, you checked the hoses?”

“Yes, Captain.” Derek wasn’t smirking now. His look was pure concentration.

“Alex, you and Samuel have point. Derek, you’re with me. We go in slow and clear each room.” He jumped onto the truck and took one last look around the building. His gaze caught on me and he hesitated. “Go on home, Emma. We’ll be out late.”

I didn’t get paid to leave early, but there was no need in staying clocked in and sitting around doing nothing. The fire truck pulled out of the bay, sirens wailing as it screamed down the street. They were on their way to put their lives in danger while I stood there like a ninny wishing Henry had finished what he started.

What did he mean by all that, anyway? And giving me permission to fuck Alex or Derek? What was that all about? What about Samuel?

So many questions raced through my head that an ache formed behind my eyes. I rubbed at it and made my way back into Henry’s office. Papers had scattered all over the floor from our passionate moment. I stopped to pick them up before grabbing my purse and the address and keys from Derek.

Their place wasn’t far, and the weather had turned warm for the moment. I put my horny, unfulfilled ass to use and walked to the apartment building that was in the opposite direction from my own.

I’m flabbergasted that he’d just given me the address and keys like that. I mean, I considered myself trustworthy, but what did they really know about me?

They’d seen me at my worst. Yesterday, I was homeless and jobless. Thank goodness I’d left some clothes at Grandma’s a few months ago or I wouldn’t have had anything to change into this morning.

And now that I had the memory of Henry fingering me while I wore this skirt, it was now one of my favorites.

Derek and Alex's apartment complex looked similar to my own. Brown brick covered the outside and worn carpet the inside. But they had a working elevator, so bonus points for them.

I paused outside the apartment door and peeked up and down the hallway. No one jumped out to stop or question me when I inserted the key and turned the knob.

Whoa. I hesitated on the threshold and double-checked the number Derek had written on the paper. They lived here? The apartment was not only tastefully decorated with a sleek couch, a kitchen table with matching chairs, and stainless steel appliances, but it was spotless.

I closed and locked the door behind me, then threw my purse on the small island in the middle of the kitchen and kicked off my shoes before I began my exploration.

Two hallways split off from the living room. The one on the right led to a small bedroom with a full-sized bed, dresser, and its own bathroom. This must be my room.

I chewed on my lip and inched toward the other hallway. Henry had said they'd be gone all day. I shouldn't have to worry about them catching me snooping. I deserved to know what kind of men I'd agreed to move in with. Snooping was totally allowed. The next door I opened revealed a bedroom done in darker tones. Shoes were lined up in the closet and the bed was perfectly made. Alex's room, I decided. I knew I was right when the next bedroom had protein shakes and weights in the corner.

The cleanliness surprised me, though it shouldn't come as a shock that the two men didn't live like animals.

What did Henry's home look like? And Samuel's? Did they own houses or live in apartments?

My attraction to all four men was getting out of hand. I'd asked Henry to fuck me today and he turned me away. It should be obvious that Derek would be my preferred bed

buddy, but I liked all of them. Even Alex, with his quiet reticence.

If I had to pick one to sleep with, who would it be? Which one should I choose if I get the chance?

DEREK

Bacon? The tantalizing scent dragged my tired ass up out of the bed. I rubbed my gritty eyes and blinked at the alarm clock. Six o'clock? Why the hell was Alex cooking so early? A yawn cracked my jaw. We'd been out until late fighting a big structure fire at an abandoned warehouse. I was exhausted and horny. Not a good combination.

I rolled off the bed and landed on the balls of my feet. The scent grew stronger when I opened my bedroom door and my stomach grumbled. I'd harp on him after I ate breakfast. My sleep-addled brain screeched to a halt when I rounded the corner and spotted Emma in the kitchen. She wore a long t-shirt that hung off one shoulder. It covered her ass but when she shook her hips and raised her arm overhead, I was given a glorious view of rounded cheeks and lacy red underwear.

My erection strained forward, and I swear to God it pulled me into the kitchen.

Emma shimmied her hips again and sang into the spatula handle. Her voice was low and husky, the perfect blend of sex and sleep. I couldn't help myself. I slid an arm over her hip and pulled her back against my chest.

She squeaked a tiny scream and jerked in my arms, spinning around and holding the spatula up like a weapon. Big brown eyes widened, and she blinked then reached up and pulled out her earbuds. "Derek. You scared me to death."

“Sorry.” I wasn’t, but it seemed like a bad idea to admit I didn’t mind her wiggling.

She looked down and sucked in a breath. Her eyes shot back to mine as her face turned cherry red. “You’re naked.”

“Almost.” I held up a finger. “The distinction is important. I’m wearing boxers.”

“Um.” She pointed downward and whispered. “Part of you is escaping.”

I looked down and saw my dick poked out through the front flap. “Oh. Would you look at that?” I watched her face as I wrapped a hand around my shaft and stroked it. “Somebody’s up early.”

Her throat bobbed. “Sorry if I woke you.” She licked her lower lip, then sank her teeth into it, pulling it into her mouth.

“I’m not.” I took a step back so the popping bacon grease didn’t catch me by surprise. “Walking in here and finding you shaking your ass is a sight better than what I expected.”

“I was not shaking my ass.” Her blush deepened. She stretched over the stove, flashing those red panties again, and turned off the stove.

“You were shaking your ass and singing. And it was sexy as hell.” I leaned my elbows on the island and stretched my back. My cock lifted into the air and my gut tightened when she watched me with a look of fascination. “And I’d really like to kiss you right now.”

Her gaze flicked down to my crotch and back up to my eyes. “Okay.”

I took the spatula from her hand and set it on the counter beside the stove then put both hands on her hips and walked her between my legs. Her belly touched mine and I sank into her softness. Her breath hitched when I stroked my thumb over her chin and tugged her bottom lip free of her teeth.

She had a perfect, kissable mouth. I’d been thinking about it since we met, and I couldn’t wait any longer to taste that

sweetness. I touched my lips to hers, slow at first, giving her a chance to back away.

When she splayed her hands over my chest and leaned into me, I gave her more. Her lips parted on a sigh, and I ran my tongue into her mouth. She tasted like mint and bacon, a curious but sexy combination. Time slowed as I explored her mouth and her curves.

Her nipples peaked beneath the shirt and grazed my chest when she stood on her tiptoes to better the angle. The move put my cock between her legs and she squeezed them together, encasing me.

I rocked my hips, testing her, and felt her gasp. That was all the encouragement I needed to sweep her up into my arms and lift her onto the counter.

She squealed and grabbed my shoulders, holding on tight. “What are you doing?”

“Enjoying my breakfast.” I swept her dark curls over her shoulders and slid my hands across her smooth neck.

Her breathing hitched and she shifted on the counter, drawing her legs together.

I ran my hands down her arms, over her waist and to her legs. My thumbs grazed the inside of her thighs and she shuddered. Her eyes darkened with desire and my cock throbbed in response. I couldn’t wait to sink into her, but I had other things in mind first. I ran one finger up her leg. “I’m going to eat you out, right here on the kitchen counter, and then, when you’re so hot you can barely think straight, I’ll give you my cock.” I stroked it and watched her wide gaze take in my impressive length.

She licked her lips and opened her mouth. Again, I imagined her wrapping those pink lips around my cock. Later. There would be time for that later.

“We can skip right to the fucking part.” She panted and shivered again when I slid one finger beneath her soaked panties and touched her. “Oh fuck.”

“Soon, baby.” I worked her panties down over her hips and tossed them aside. “After I taste this delicious pussy.”

Her throat worked but no sound came out and her eyes darted to me and then down to her sex. Nervous? Why?

I cupped her in the palm of my hand and circled her clit with the pad of my thumb. “What’s wrong?”

Her head thrashed from side to side. “No-nothing.”

“Hmm.” I pressed gently on her clit and groaned when she bucked into my hand. “It’s no use lying to me.” I took my hand away and leaned into the space between her legs. My dick ached with the need to come, but I wasn’t about to take this another inch forward until I heard the truth.

Perfect white teeth sank into her bottom lip. “You don’t have to... do that.” She made a vague motion between us. “It’s fine.”

My eyes narrowed and I took a step closer, almost but not quite sliding my cock between her folds. “You don’t like it?”

A coarse laugh spilled from her throat. “God. I can’t believe we’re talking about this. It’s fine, Derek. I’m horny as shit. You don’t have to try and impress me.”

Realization dawned and I gaped at her despite trying my best to keep a stoic expression. “You’ve never come this way, have you?”

Her head fell back against the counter and she covered her face with her hands.

“Tell me the truth, Emma.” I kissed her stomach, then moved my lips higher. Her rounded breasts and peaked nipples drew my gaze. I pulled a nipple into my mouth and pinched the other between my thumb and forefinger, rolling and plucking it as she gasped and arched her hips. She almost took my cock without even trying, and I shifted my hips away. I was a man on a mission.

Her hands delved into my hair, nails scraping my scalp. “My last boyfriend didn’t like going down on me.” Her breathing hitched again, and I couldn’t tell if it was passion or

pain at reliving the memory. Maybe a combination of both. “He said it wasn’t fun for him.”

I released her nipple from my mouth. “Fucking asshole.” Fury burned through me. “I bet he didn’t mind you sucking him off, though.”

She blinked at me, her lips slightly parted. Pink stained her cheeks in a wild mixture of arousal and embarrassment.

“I can promise that it’s fun for me. And that you’re going to love it.” I kissed the valley between her breasts. “Will you let me try to please you that way?” I needed her permission before things went any further. If she denied me, then we’d move on, but I wasn’t about to stop without at least trying to show her that not all men were assholes who didn’t know how to please a woman.

She nodded once, the movement jerky.

A surge of heat swept through me and I grinned at her. “I’ll take care of you, Emma.” I settled my hands on her inner thighs and spread her legs apart. Her sex gleamed with her juices, and it took most of my control not to dive right in. She needed this to be slow, so I made myself take my time.

Using my thumbs, I slid her lips apart and leaned over her. My mouth hovered there, inches from her pussy. I stroked her clit with my thumb and followed it with my mouth. I licked her opening.

“Oh God.” She twisted and grabbed hold of the edge of the counter, her knuckles whitening.

I gave her another second to adjust and then went back for another taste. This time, I stroked my tongue over her in a smooth swipe before wrapping my lips around her and sucking. My tongue circled her clit in a slow motion that had her gasping.

The muscles in her thighs quivered and twitched, telling me that she was already close to an orgasm. I slid a finger inside her and pumped it deep while my tongue pressed harder on her clit.

She undulated over my mouth, her hips grinding onto my face as she sought her release. She might have felt embarrassed before, but her body knew what it needed now, and she listened to it.

“Derek. I’m coming. Oh fuck that feels good.” Her back arched. “Don’t stop. Please.”

I added another finger to her tight pussy and groaned as her walls convulsed and clamped down. She was going to feel so good on my cock.

She bit down on the back of her hand, her entire body shaking from the power of her orgasm.

I lapped it up, enjoying every fucking second, knowing that I’d been the one to show her how good it was to have a man’s face between her legs.

I lifted my head but kept pumping my fingers into her. “Now you’re ready.” I removed my fingers from her and swung her up into my arms.

She looped one arm around my neck and blinked as I carried her over to the couch. “Should we go to the bedroom?” Her blush darkened. “What about Alex?” She searched the room frantically. “Shit, I forgot about Alex. What if he’d walked out of his room while...”

“Alex stayed at the station last night. By the time we got back, he was too exhausted to bother coming home.” I lowered her to the couch and stripped off my boxers, then her shirt. “Don’t worry, we won’t be interrupted.”

She reached for me, her hand wrapping around my cock.

I thrust into her hand and had the pleasure of watching her eyes widen as she took in the full sight of me. I was proud of my dick and didn’t mind showing it off to her.

Before I realized what she had planned, she leaned forward, wrapped her lips around the head of my cock, and pulled me into her mouth. “Fuck.” I growled like a feral animal and barely stopped myself from thrusting into her throat.

I reined in my desire and forced myself to let her explore. She sucked harder, drawing me deeper. Her hand moved down my shaft, stroking where her mouth couldn't reach.

"Emma." I withdrew from her mouth and tipped her chin up to face me. God she was sexy sitting there with her sweet lips ready to take me in.

"I want you bare inside me." She looked up with full, innocent eyes. "I'm on the pill."

Thank fuck. I didn't mind condoms, but going bare was a whole new level of fun. "Turn around and get on your knees." She looked at me questioningly but did as I said. "Put your arms over the back of the couch and lean forward."

Again, she followed my instructions. I wasn't the order-driven asshole that Henry was, but I knew what I wanted right now, and it was the sight of Emma and I fucking in the mirror across the room.

Once she was in position, she spotted herself in the mirror and shook her head.

"Trust me." I settled in behind her. The couch was the perfect height for this position. It put Emma's ass right in front of my cock. I put a hand on her spine and bent her forward a tiny bit. "You're beautiful, Emma. Watch me fuck you."

I slid between her legs and over her entrance. Her thighs tightened, and I reached over her hip to guide my cock inside. I gave her the tip but nothing else. Her mouth opened in an O as she adjusted to my girth.

I leaned forward and kissed the back of her neck, giving her another inch in the process.

"I need more." She tipped her ass up and watched me in the mirror. "I need your dick. All of it. I'm going to go insane if I don't feel every inch of you."

I rolled forward, burying myself to the hilt in one smooth motion.

"Yes." Her eyelids fluttered closed and she bit her lip.

“I want to hear you when you come.” I rubbed my thumb over her mouth, pulling her lip free. “Don’t hold back, baby. Let me hear you scream.”

A lock clicked and the front door swung open. Alex and Samuel strode in.

EMMA

I'd never been an exhibitionist, but seeing Derek behind me as he thrust his thick cock inside me almost changed my mind. He was magnificent, with his sculpted muscles and gorgeous face. I hated the sight of myself, but I could watch him all day. And that cock? It was damned delicious as he stroked me. Derek had the kind of cock that I found impossible to resist. Long and thick, it made me horny just looking at it.

Thank fuck he knew how to use it. He knew how to use his mouth and tongue too. I'd never had anyone make me orgasm from oral sex before. I was always either too self-conscious or the guy didn't know what the fuck he was doing.

Derek might've restored my faith in mankind.

Footsteps interrupted my thoughts, and I snapped my head to the side.

Alex and Samuel walked casually into the apartment and closed the door. Shit. They hadn't spotted us yet, but they would. I started to try and cover myself, but there was nothing I could do. Derek's positioning had me splayed out over the back of the couch, and his hand in the center of my back kept me from straightening. He worked his cock deep into me, and I bit the inside of my cheek to keep quiet.

I knew the second Alex caught sight of us. His entire body stiffened when he reached the kitchen, and I watched the transformation in his profile. A muscle twitched in his jaw and

his nostrils flared. His head turned, and he took us in with a sweeping glance as his eyes narrowed.

Samuel saw me a second later as he followed Alex. Unlike Alex, he faced us head-on and a broad grin flashed. “Well, shit. Looks like we interrupted.”

Derek pulled back. I expected him to pull out and apologize to Alex and Samuel. I prayed to God and all the angels that we’d move into a bedroom and finish instead of him abandoning me out of embarrassment for getting caught. I started to say something, but then he thrust into me again and all thought fled. His thumb and index finger pinched my clit lightly, and he rocked his hips in a slow, excruciating wave that pumped him deeper and deeper with each move.

Alex turned to face us fully. I expected to see disgust in both his and Samuel’s faces. I tried again to apologize and to tell Derek to stop.

“Damn.” Samuel swallowed hard and moved closer. “That is a beautiful sight.”

Derek’s grin widened in the mirror. “We’re just getting started. You can stay or go. Up to you and Emma.” He felt so good that my eyes rolled back and I moaned. I lifted my ass so I could take him deeper and lowered my head to the back of the couch.

“That’s it.” Derek’s low voice seemed to fill the entire apartment with sexual tension.

I forced my eyes open and found Samuel and Alex watching us. Again, I waited for the disgust, but all I saw was curiosity. And heat.

Samuel’s eyes held mine as he walked closer. His hands fisted at his sides. “Damn, Derek. I knew I should’ve moved faster.”

Derek laughed low in his throat. “Want to see what happens when I move faster?”

The man was a damned showoff. He was proud of himself for being the one to fuck me. I couldn’t say I was disappointed either. Especially when he increased his pace, thrusting in and

out of me several times in rapid succession. I tightened around him and gasped.

Alex inched into view behind Samuel. He looked me over, his gaze pausing on my ass before coming back up to my tits and then my face. My entire body turned hot from the flushed look that burned in his eyes. He wasn't as unaffected by me as he pretended. Good to know.

I caught sight of myself in the mirror and almost jerked my gaze away, but the sight riveted me. Derek's stomach muscles flexed as he slowed again. His cock pulsed inside me as he buried it balls deep then withdrew to the tip and repeated the motion. Every move stroked the tension inside me, coiling it tighter and tighter.

My head fell forward and I gripped the back of the couch as a wave of bliss rolled through me.

"Maybe we should leave." Alex shoved his hands into his pockets but kept his eyes trained on me.

Derek rubbed my clit and circled his hips. "Do you want them to leave, Emma?"

I couldn't articulate a response other than to moan.

"I think that's a no." His fingers left my clit and he grabbed hold of my hips. "We could share. As long as Emma is happy, and you treat her with respect, I wouldn't mind."

Shock rippled up my spine at the words. I'd never been shared before either. What would that be like? I locked eyes with Samuel. Heat pooled in his dark eyes, and I couldn't look anywhere else. A bulge in his pants said he was turned on. I didn't know if it was because of me or just because he had live action porn playing out before his eyes.

Was this my chance to be more sexually adventurous? The sudden desire to have Samuel's cock in my mouth while Derek fucked me tightened my pussy into a vise.

"Fuck." Derek groaned. "What's going on in that mind of yours, Emma?" He thrust slow and deep. "Are you thinking about getting shared?"

My core tightened again. Samuel rubbed a hand over his crotch, outlining his erection. Fuck me. He might be bigger than Derek.

“Oh, she likes that.” Derek leaned over my back and framed my body with his. “Your pussy is so tight it’s begging me to come. But you have to go first, baby. I told you I want to hear you scream.” His hips pistoned, his entire body flexing with the move, and I felt every inch of him dragging through me. He planted one foot on the couch and lifted my leg over his arm, adjusting the angle until his thrusts went so deep I lost my mind.

Pleasure exploded throughout my body, and I bit back a cry from the burst.

Derek clucked his tongue. “You’re holding back.” He settled into a steady rhythm that built the orgasm into a fierce, clawing need that pulsed at the base of my neck until my scalp tingled.

He demanded that I let go of my inhibitions and give him what he wanted. He’d been right about everything so far. What did I lose if I gave him this too?

“Fuck me, Derek. Oh God.” I needed more of something, but I didn’t know what. The edge was right there, waiting for me to tip over. “I can’t…” I ground my teeth and reached for the orgasm. It was so close. So fucking close and yet out of reach.

“I got you.” Derek sped up. “Let go, baby. Let it all go. You’re safe with us. You’re so damned beautiful. His fingers grazed my neck, and he grabbed my boob with one hand and fingered my clit with the other. “Shatter for me.”

“Go ahead, Emma.” Samuel’s gravely voice reached across the room and wrapped me in heat.

“That’s it,” Derek crooned. “Take what you need. Ride it until you fall apart.”

I realized I was bucking over his cock like an animal and I didn’t give a fuck. He gave me so much pleasure, how could I stand more?

Alex made a noise in the back of his throat. He wrenched his hands from his pockets and draped them over the top of his head. A slow breath ran out of him, and I couldn't tell if he wanted to leave or be next in line.

The orgasm hit with a suddenness that yanked a scream from my throat before I could muffle the sound. I hung onto the back of the couch, my body shaking and falling apart.

"That's my girl." Derek's back arched and the shift in angle drove another orgasm up and over me in a cresting wave. "Damn that feels good. I don't want to stop. You're making me come, Emma."

I jerked my head up to watch him in the mirror. His eyes were already there, watching us. Samuel and Alex stood just within sight, their reflections shining back in the glass. Alex's jaw was locked down, the muscle there jumping like a heartbeat. But he stayed. That had to mean something.

Derek grimaced and bared his teeth in a victorious smile. His cock pulsed inside me, spilling his cum in my depths. My pussy tightened again, milking him dry. His shoulders shook and he rocked his hips a few more times before bracing his hands on the back of the couch.

His chest pressed into my spine, his breaths coming out in ragged bursts. Sweat slicked our skin, and I'd never felt more satisfied.

I couldn't believe I'd had sex with Derek, much less in front of Samuel and Alex. The two firefighters continued to watch me and Derek. I waited with a sense of breathless anticipation. Would one of them want to go next? What did sharing mean? Had they done it before? That question brought me up short.

Did I want to be passed around between these men? Yes. The answer came sure and swift. This was my chance to bypass the old, boring Emma and enjoy something new and exciting.

Sex had never been like this before. It was overwhelming but in the kind of way that excited me and made me want

more.

“I thought you were staying at the firehouse?” Derek directed his question at Alex while pulling out of me.

Samuel retreated to another room and came back seconds later with a towel that he passed to Derek.

“Needed to come home and get clean clothes.” Alex’s voice sounded strangled like he couldn’t remember how to talk. “Didn’t think to call first and make sure you weren’t fucking someone on the couch.”

I should probably feel ashamed, but I was too satisfied.

Derek barked out a laugh. “You were the one who stayed and watched. Don’t act like you didn’t enjoy the show.”

He was right. No one made Alex stay. He could have walked away at any point, but he watched.

Derek used the warm towel to clean me up and then himself. He nodded his thanks to Samuel, who barely noticed.

Muscles stood out along Samuel’s neck, and his erection still bulged in his jeans. The thin t-shirt did nothing to hide his broad chest and thick muscles. I imagined those arms locked around me, his cock buried deep inside while Derek fucked my mouth.

Good God. The mental image made me horny all over again. I pushed back from the couch and stood on shaky legs. Derek looped an arm around my waist, and I leaned into him. My hand splayed over his stomach as the muscles flexed. His cock hung at half-mast, the girth and weight still impressive.

“I enjoyed the show.” Samuel winked at me. “God a damned hard on that won’t quit.” He rubbed his palm over his cock again.

My nerves shot into overdrive, and it took way too much effort not to drop back onto the couch and offer myself to him like a goose on a silver platter.

I should be completely satisfied. I was, I told myself. The buzz from my orgasm lingered, but the temptation of more pushed the edges of my boundaries.

My phone alarm rang shrilly, causing me to jump. I slapped a hand over my mouth. “I have to get ready for work. Henry will kill me if I’m late again.”

Derek grinned and a mischievous light entered his eyes. “Henry’s not so bad. A bit of a control freak.” He shrugged. “Maybe you like that sort of thing too?”

The question took me by surprise. Henry was the one who’d told me to take my pick of Alex or Derek. He’d warned me away from himself, citing his darker desires as the reason he wouldn’t fuck me himself. Now Derek was trying to push me toward Henry?

What the fuck was going on? And why did the idea turn me on so much?

I should be appalled at the idea of them sharing me. I should feel debased, like they thought I was property they could pass around.

That’s not how I felt at all. Especially when I remembered how Henry had looked at me. He’d been attracted to me. He’d wanted to fuck me right there in his office. My chest hitched on a breath.

“I’m not sure I know what I like anymore,” I admitted while looking at the three of them. My phone continued to blare the alarm.

Samuel strode into the kitchen and picked up my phone, silencing the alarm. “I have to know what you think, Emma.”

“About what?” My throat turned dry. I thought I knew what he was about to ask, and I didn’t know how I should answer him.

“What do you think about Derek’s idea?” He picked up my panties from the kitchen floor and held them out to me on the bend of one finger. One long, rugged finger that immediately had my mind tangling in knots. “Would you be willing to share that glorious body with us?”

ALEX

Damn me to hell for my delicious thoughts.

Emma grasped her panties, pulling them from Samuel's grasp. Her naked body blushed, and all I could think about was taking Derek's place and pounding my dick into her until she screamed for me too. What was I doing?

I saw myself in the mirror and paused. Images of Emma bent over the couch with my cock in her mouth bombarded me. I couldn't shake loose from her no matter how hard I tried.

Samuel wore his erection proudly, not bothering to hide it as he smiled at Emma and waited for her answer.

I shoved my hands back into my pockets to hide the bulge of my cock. My thumb grazed the side of it, and I ground my teeth at the burst of need.

Emma looked down at the panties in her hand like she couldn't decide whether to put them on or run away. Her round ass cheeks were pointed in my direction, and I squeezed my cock through my pocket. The friction made everything worse.

Derek picked up her shirt from behind the couch but didn't offer it to her. We were animals, letting her stand there naked and vulnerable. But she didn't ask for her shirt, and the way she looked at all of us like she was desperate made me hot with desire.

I was intrigued by the idea of sharing Emma. If today was any indication, we were all seriously hot for her. I'd just

watched my friend have sex, and the only thing that I could think of was *me next*.

How could I be thinking that so soon after my breakup? Maybe a little casual sex is exactly what I need. Derek hounded me a week ago, telling me it would help me get over my ex. I wasn't sure he was right, but I knew that Emma would be an excellent distraction. I loved sex. Like, maybe more than was healthy. At least, that was what my ex said when I tried to sleep with her more than twice a week.

Derek's constant refrain that sex was relaxing had never appeared more true. Emma continued to blush, but her body was fluid, totally at ease. Derek was the same. He'd never been ill at ease with his body, but the quiet smile he wore now was a testament to his relaxed state.

Emma chewed on her bottom lip and looked at each of us. Her wide brown eyes landed on me, and she clutched her panties between those gorgeous tits. "How would that work?" Her voice came out breathy and excited.

I surprised myself by answering before the others. "There are multiple ways it could work. Several ways we'd all find pleasure." I ignored Samuel's smirk and the two thumbs-up Derek waved behind Emma's back.

I wasn't expecting to find anything to say to Emma, but the thought of not being with her because she was with Derek made my skin chafe. My erection continued pressing against the zipper of my jeans. I wasn't ready to have sex with her, even if my dick thought otherwise. My attraction to her was secondary to recovering from my breakup. Once I'd cleared my head and gotten back to myself, then I could think about sex with Emma.

But I couldn't stop talking about it. My mind ran off with me, and the words poured out before I could stop them. "You could have two of us at once. Maybe three. You might like having one of us fuck you while you suck someone's dick." I expected to frighten her with my coarse language and the vivid pictures I created. "It's possible, with the right angles, for two of us to fuck your ass and pussy at the same time."

Her eyes widened and her mouth dropped open slightly. Her breaths came in little gasps.

“And you could suck someone off at the same time,” I continued. “Just depends on whether three guys are willing to get naked in the same room together and have their junk banging together.” Was I the type of guy who was willing to go that far? I couldn’t say for sure, but I knew that if Emma wanted it, I’d be tempted. More tempted than I cared to admit.

“You can come to each of us individually for sex,” Samuel chimed in. “It doesn’t have to be as intense as Alex implied.” He gave me a *what-the-fuck-are-you-doing* look that I ignored.

She’d asked a question. I provided an answer. I wouldn’t tell her I’d read more than one book on the subject matter in the hopes of spicing up my love life to satisfy my ex.

“You don’t have to feel obligated to take on more than one guy,” Derek said.

I was thinking that too, but more along the lines of a threesome with Emma in the middle.

“And if I wanted to... take more than one of you?” she asked it with such sweet innocence that I bit back a groan.

Derek looked at Samuel, who lifted his shoulders in a tight shrug. They were willing. They both turned to me with questioning looks.

Emma turned another slow circle, then her gaze caught on the phone still in Samuel’s hand. “Shit. I have to go.” She snatched the phone from him and raced toward the spare bedroom. Her bedroom.

Fucking hell. She lived with us now. Which meant I’d have to hear her and see her every damned day. And I’d definitely hear her if she had sex with Derek again. That scream was something I’d never forget.

Samuel’s gaze followed Emma’s bouncing ass all the way to her bedroom, where she closed the door after glancing back one last time. We must’ve embarrassed her. Instead of answering, she ran away. We did put her on the spot. I didn’t blame her for needing time and space to make a decision like

that. Kind of hard to think straight with three horny men staring you down. Not that I'd know anything about that, but if the situation was reversed, I'd have a hard time answering too.

“Was that a yes or a no?” Samuel asked Derek.

Still naked, Derek shrugged. “Guess we'll find out. In the meantime, I'm going to fuck her every chance I get.”

His smirk rubbed me the wrong way and I paced across the kitchen to stand in front of him. “Watch yourself with her.”

“What's that supposed to mean?” He nudged my shoulder with one hand, driving me back a step. “Emma's great.”

“I know. And you need to remember that. Be careful you don't hurt her.” I didn't know where those words came from, but I meant every last one of them. The sound of shower water running brought us both up short.

Derek shoved a hand through his hair and took a step back. “I have to get ready for work.”

Yeah, so did I. I wasn't looking forward to seeing Emma at home and at work. Her presence poked at me in unexplainable ways. I wanted to be near her but also wanted to stay far, far away. The dichotomy rattled my self-confidence. Though, if I was being honest, my ex did a pretty good job of that herself.

Samuel strolled over to the couch and sat down. “I'll wait here.” Of course he would. He probably hoped to distract Emma when she tried to leave.

“Henry's already on her ass about being late yesterday,” I reminded Samuel.

The older firefighter's grin grew wider. He slouched further down on the couch and crossed his right ankle over his left knee. “I know. The man needs someone to get him riled up. Our Emma might be just the woman to do it.”

“Our Emma?” I shook my head. “She's not *our* anything.”

“Not yet.” Samuel stared hard at Emma's door.

Something about the way he said it made it sound like this was a guaranteed thing. I knew Emma was interested. But that

didn't mean she'd take any of us—or all of us—up on the offer.

“Whatever.” I slashed a hand through the air. “I’m going to shower. Alone.” I reiterated when Samuel raised an eyebrow.

Emma’s water stopped running. I turned on my heel and hightailed it to my room, slamming the door behind me before my libido could take over and carry me into her room.

I kicked my heel against the floor to drag my boot off and followed it with the second. My pants went next, followed by my shirt and underwear. My erection sprang free, and I looked down at the betraying member.

“We’re not supposed to like her.” I spoke to my cock like it could understand why we shouldn’t be excited at the thought of being intimate with Emma.

Growling under my breath, I grabbed clean clothes from my closet and stalked into the bathroom, where I closed and locked the door. I knew better than to leave it open in case Derek decided to talk Emma into having pity on me and joining me in the shower.

The thought of it caused a jolt of excitement to run straight to my erection. I turned on the water and climbed into the shower with the weight of my cock in my hand. I had to find relief. And if I wasn’t willing to ask Emma for it, then I’d do it myself.

I sank onto the narrow bench seat and stretched out my legs. Hot water peppered my throat and chest and ran down my stomach. I wrapped one hand around my shaft and stroked it downward while imagining Emma spread out in front of me. I sank deep into the fantasy and fisted my dick tighter.

Derek said she was tight. I’d seen his dick. I might be slightly shorter, but I was a damned sight thicker. If she took me, it would stretch her. I’d have to go slow, let her adjust to my girth. I’d never had a woman complain about my size until my ex. She acted like I was too small for her, though I knew otherwise. Still, it had shaken me to hear her bemoan my sexual experience when we made love.

Emma wasn't like that. I'd seen the enjoyment on her face when Derek took her. She'd loved every minute and had been on the verge of asking for more when her phone alarm went off. She'd thought about what I said, and I'd seen raw need in her eyes when I mentioned taking all of us.

Was it possible that she'd take on more than one of us? My erection swelled at the thought, and I resorted to two hands to get the full amount of pressure I needed.

With my fingers laced together, I created a tunnel that I thrustured into while working my hands up and down.

Every thought turned to Emma and the look of pure ecstasy on her face as she screamed and came. The sight had twisted within me, and for the first time in my life, I'd been jealous of Derek. Jealous that he'd gotten to feel her pleasure while I stood aside and watched. I should feel like a perv for not walking away, but she was so glorious. Walking away would've been a shame. Why should I miss watching something so beautiful when I knew she liked seeing me there?

I pictured Emma in the middle of my bed, naked and ready for me. I pumped my hands and imagined it was her tight pussy wrapping around me. I wanted her on top of me, her tits bouncing as she rode my dick hard and fast. She'd bunch her hair up in her hands, thrusting her boobs forward for me to grab. She had wonderfully heavy breasts, the kind that I loved to fondle and suck. My touch would drive her wild, and she'd scream my name while she came on my cock.

My toes curled while my back arched, and I shoved myself deep into my hands. My cum spurted out in thick waves that hit the shower wall and trickled down. I shuddered my way through the aftershocks then grabbed the removable shower head and cleaned the wall.

There was no doubt about it, I was completely hung up on Emma. Not that I'd do anything about my feelings. They were safely locked away. As long as I stayed away from her and didn't give into Derek's ridiculous idea of sharing her, then I'd be fine. It's not like she'd agree anyway. It was the heat of the

moment that made her consider it. Now that she'd taken a step back, she'd realize she didn't want to do anything so far outside of societal norms.

I took in a deep breath and made myself stand and shower. By the time I stepped out of the bathroom a half hour later with my clothes on and my hair dried, with my beard freshly trimmed, Emma was long gone.

Samuel waited for me in the kitchen, casually eating from a plate of cold bacon. "Feel better?"

"Shut up." I grabbed my phone and keys from the shelf where I always dropped them and started to shove them into my pockets. The phone screen flickered on when my thumb grazed the front. My message icon showed one new message.

"I'll feel a lot better once I get Emma's answer." Samuel continued. He'd been my mentor since I joined the fire department, but right now, I wished he'd leave me alone. He'd taught me everything I knew about fighting fires and been my best friend despite our age difference. He was also my superior, but that only mattered when we were on duty.

"Shut up or I swear I'll tell Emma that you take steroids and your dick is the size of a peanut." It wasn't true, and anyone who bothered to look at Samuel's junk would know that, but the threat silenced him long enough for me to focus on my phone.

I frowned while opening the message app, and the sight of my ex's name on the screen tightened my gut into a knot. Even though I knew better, I opened the message and read it all the way through.

She wanted to meet.

EMMA

“Don’t be late. Don’t be late. Don’t be late.” I raced into Henry’s office with seconds to spare and tossed my purse onto the tiny desk he’d set in there for me. He glanced my way then at the silver watch wrapped snug around his wrist. One eyebrow arched up in a semblance of a smirk, but he didn’t say a word.

I refused to let him ruin the feeling of triumph I felt at having made it, especially after the morning I’d had. My cheeks heated at the reminder of what I’d just been doing, and the sensation left me feeling out of sorts. I’d had sex with Derek.

And it was fantastic. I still felt him between my legs, and a rush of heat settled in like I hadn’t just had the best sexual experience of my life. How could I still be horny after this morning? It made no sense, but I definitely wouldn’t turn down another chance to feel that marvelous cock.

Or one of the others.

Oh shit. My face flamed hotter, and I almost reached for the stack of papers on the corner of my desk. I didn’t know if I intended to use them as a fan for my flushed skin or to hide behind.

Henry’s gaze landed on me. I tried to ignore it, but the man had a stare that was impossible to ignore.

I’d had sex with Derek in front of Samuel and Alex. Having Henry look at me like that shouldn’t be nearly as embarrassing as all that. I remembered the way they’d looked

at me, the raw hunger in Samuel's gaze and the flickers of want in Alex's eyes. They'd wanted me too. I didn't understand it at all.

Henry opened a drawer and pulled out a stack of papers. He started flipping through them, and the sight of deft fingers caused my breath to hitch.

"Put these in the file behind you. The one labeled 'Updated Protocols.'" He held the papers out to me.

Heat pumped into the room from the nearby vents. The one behind Henry shot his cologne straight at me, and I inhaled the scent deep into my lungs. The spicy sweetness reminded me of Christmas.

I stood on shaky legs and retrieved the papers. Our fingers brushed and the electric current that raced up my arm caused me to drop the whole stack. The pages fluttered and scattered, landing on the floor in a wild disarray. "Shit." I dropped to my knees and started gathering them up. Pages were out of order, and some had drifted beneath Henry's desk. I eyed the space and tugged my hair over my shoulder to keep it out of my face. "I'm sorry."

It was no worse than letting Samuel and Alex watch me have sex, I told myself while scooping pages into my arms. It didn't feel wrong. And if I'd had time, I would've accepted an offer for a threesome or foursome. If one of them had asked. That simple fact startled me, and I gasped while sitting back on my heels.

Henry watched me. One elbow rested on the table as he stroked a finger over his upper lip, going back and forth in a slow, methodical move. "Problem?" He'd nailed the thoughtful pose, but I spotted his foot bouncing up and down beneath the desk.

What had him riled up this morning? My ineptitude or something else? It was impossible to tell with Henry. He kept everything hidden behind that stoic mask of indifference.

I wanted to take a sledgehammer to his mask and shatter it into a million pieces. Who was he when no one was looking? I

shook my head and clutched the papers to my stomach. “No.” My heart raced. I hadn’t gotten all the papers yet, but the thought of moving closer to Henry, to running my hand beneath his desk again, caused my breathing to hitch. I’d never know him, not like I could get to know Derek, Samuel, and maybe even Alex.

They hadn’t outright offered a foursome this morning. But the implication was there that they were open to it... if I was. My body flushed so hot I might as well be a supernova. I was being ridiculous. They didn’t all want to share me. It was a crazy idea. Alex’s words were meant to shock me, and they had. Samuel’s offer to let me go to any one of them for sex made more sense but still...

Guys didn’t really share like that. From my experience, guys wanted a woman to think about no one else but them. Even if they were seeing multiple women at the same time. Like my ex. The bastard. I didn’t share well. The thought of any of them with another woman annoyed me more than I thought possible. I barely knew them. I didn’t have any reason whatsoever to feel so protective.

“Are you going to stay there all day?” Henry’s voice held a hint of amusement but mostly annoyance.

I shouldn’t be able to tell the difference already, but I could. I looked up and caught him staring at me. Specifically, at my shirt’s scooped neck. I’d chosen the royal blue shirt and a matching flowy skirt because they were comfortable, businesslike, and they made me feel sexy. But the scooped neck tended to dip a little too low in certain situations. This one was a perfect example.

I didn’t have to look down to know that I was flashing him a good amount of cleavage. “No.” I held the papers higher, covering my chest, and stood.

The clock behind him ticked down the time. I’d only been here half an hour? Damn. How was I going to make it another eleven and a half hours? My shifts didn’t run exactly like Henry’s. He was on twenty-four-hour shifts that sometimes ran over. Like today.

“Are you going to say anything to me other than *no*?” He lowered his hand to his thigh and rubbed it briefly.

I took note of the position, which was awfully close to his dick. “No?” I looked away from him and sat gingerly on the edge of my seat. Lowering the pages to the desk, I sorted them into order. I was still missing several, but I wasn’t going back for them until I had myself under control.

The tiny space Henry had made for me in his office shrank with each tick of the clock until my skin prickled every time he took a breath. I crossed my legs and squeezed them together. The man had barely looked at me and hadn’t touched me in any kind of sexual way, so why was I so turned on?

Still ignoring him, I yanked the binder off the wall and shoved the papers inside. Henry reached down and grabbed the remaining ones from the floor near his feet. “You forgot these.”

“Thanks.” My throat worked as I wrenched the pages away from him and added them to the mess. “I’ll sort them out later when I have a chance.” Like when he wasn’t staring at me every second like he was making a list of all the things I was doing wrong. Nervous energy zipped through me. I stood and paced to the door, glancing through the blinds. “What else do you need me to do?”

Derek, Samuel, and Alex were out in the bay, doing something near the truck. I watched them work and some of the tension eased out of me. They could get a call any second, and I’d be left alone in the office. My mind and body argued over which would be better. Sharing space with Henry for hour after agonizing hour, or sitting there with nothing to do.

“Do you know anything about writing grants?” His voice sounded too close.

I swore I felt his breath whisper over the back of my neck, and I whirled around. “I’ve written a few.”

He nodded, still seated at his desk. “Good. That’s the next thing I need done.” He picked up a blue file and tossed it onto my desk. “Everything you need is in there.”

“You can’t do them yourself?” The question slipped out between breaths.

Henry arched his eyebrow again. “I hired you to be an assistant, not to backtalk. If you can’t do the job,” he paused and shrugged, but the move was too jerky to be nonchalant. “You said you’re capable of writing grants. I hate them. So, you do them.”

He said it like his word was law. It reminded me of what Derek said this morning about Henry. He did have a tendency to bark orders and expect them to be obeyed without question. Did that have anything to do with what he’d said yesterday?

I crossed my arms over my chest and made my way slowly back to my desk. The close quarters forced me to edge past Henry’s desk. I turned to avoid him and bumped the corner of his desk with my thigh. It scraped across the floor with a screech. His coffee cup wobbled and rocked side to side, steam rising from the freshly poured cup, before giving in to gravity and toppling over.

He jumped to his feet and leaped away from the scalding liquid. Dark stains spilled over the desk and soaked the remaining papers.

“Damn it.” I grabbed the nearest thing and threw it onto his desk to try and soak up the liquid. The heavy towel turned from white to pale brown, but it worked.

Henry smoothed a hand down his chest and then pinched the bridge of his nose.

I’d fucked up big time. He’d probably fire me now. “Sorry,” I muttered under my breath while continuing to sop up the hot coffee.

Henry’s hands covered mine. “I’ll get it.”

I tightened my grip on the towel and shook my head. “It’s my fault. I’ll clean it up.”

“Emma, stop.” His fingers wrapped around my wrists, freezing me in place. “You’ve done enough this morning.”

For reasons I couldn't explain, his words caused tears to well. I tried to sniff them back, but they obscured my vision and coated my lashes. I kept messing up. I wanted Henry to like me. Not because I wanted to have sex with him—though I did—but because I really, really needed this job.

His thumbs brushed over the backs of my hands. “Let go of the towel.”

“Okay.” I released my fingers one by one and flexed them. Tension knotted in my stomach, and I tried to keep my gaze averted so I didn't have to see the anger in his eyes. I'd messed up since I walked in this morning. Nothing could save me now. “I'm not normally a screwup,” I admitted softly.

His warm chuckle said he thought otherwise. I wanted to hate him for laughing at me, but the sound was too warm and welcoming. “What would you call this morning?”

“A total fuckery of my skills.” I forced myself to smile even as I focused on his shoulder and the tight cord of muscle running up the side of his neck. He wasn't ripped like Derek or Samuel, but his strength was there. I felt it in the way he held my hands, a controlled strength that few ever saw unleashed. What would it be like to see that for myself?

“I would agree.” He laughed again, that quiet, honeyed chuckle that turned my insides soft and gooey. “Your skills were not displayed well today.”

“I've thought a lot about what you said yesterday.” I finally dragged my gaze up to his face and met his eyes.

They were not cold and distant like I expected, but neither were they welcoming. He almost had an indifferent look.

I wanted to flat-out ask him if he was mad at me, but my tongue refused to cooperate. It stuck to the roof of my mouth like dry sandpaper.

Henry watched me struggle, his hands still holding my wrists. Heat flared between us, and I leaned in just a bit.

His eyes drifted over my face, flicked down to my mouth and then back up again. “What about yesterday?”

I pursed my lips and tipped my head to the side. “I understand why you’d be mad at me.” I swallowed to clear the rasp from my throat. “Tell me what to do to fix it.”

He leaned over the desk, coming close enough that he blocked out everything else. At that moment, nothing else in the world existed. The look he gave me could melt stone with its heat. “I’m not mad at you.”

“No?” I wiggled my fingers in the towel that was growing cool beneath my palms. “Seems like you’re a little bit mad.”

My heartbeat stuttered and my stomach flipped when he smiled. His eyes crinkled at the corners, highlighting the depth of his mirth. His lips parted. “Did you have a good time with Derek this morning?”

HENRY

I shouldn't torture myself like this. The look on Emma's face was enough to make it worthwhile. She gaped at me, her mouth working but no words coming out. I'd known as soon as she walked in this morning that she'd had sex with someone. I wasn't surprised when Derek called to tell me what happened before work. He'd wanted to make sure I knew it wasn't Emma's fault if she came in late. She'd made it by the skin of her teeth, and watching her fumble through the morning was almost as much fun as it was annoying.

It would take me a full day to recover the data she'd ruined with that cup of coffee.

"What?" She glanced over her shoulder, back toward the door, and blinked. "What are you talking about?" She blushed from the sides of her neck all the way across her face. It was adorable and sexy at the same time.

The look she'd given me this morning had shot straight to my dick, which made me irritable and ready to fuck all at the same time. She'd been flushed with the aftereffects of good sex. Even the way she moved was different after a morning with Derek.

Damn it. I tried to push the picture of the two of them out of my mind but nothing short of amnesia could break her out of my thoughts. I was glad she'd had sex with Derek. At least this way I knew it was with someone who'd respect her and give her what she needed. Derek might be the most green guy

on the team, but I'd heard him talk about women and sex. He was respectful and kind. Emma deserved that.

I released her hands and sat down. "Derek told me what happened. He asked me to look out for you. Make sure what he said this morning didn't hurt you." My chest tightened at the way her eyes glazed over with desire. Derek hadn't gone into too many details, but he made it clear that he'd invited Emma to share herself with all of them if she wanted.

Too bad I'd never be part of that group. I wasn't jealous of Derek, not exactly. I simply wished that Emma could handle me and my darker desires. Sharing among three guys was one thing. Getting tied up and spanked, among other things, was a different kind of sexual game altogether.

I kept this part of myself hidden from the others. Samuel knew a little, but I'd never trusted anyone with the full depth of my dark desires. It wasn't the kind of thing that we discussed, or that I'd ever talked about at any length. I worried I'd lose their respect if they knew.

Emma lowered her arms to her sides and shifted her weight from foot to foot like she couldn't decide which way to go. "What do you mean he told you?" Her voice rose. "That's not." She crossed her arms again. "That's not okay. He can't just go around telling everyone we slept together."

"He didn't." The sudden urge to comfort her surprised me. I was used to being the tough one, but that was part of being a dom. Aftercare mattered as much as the sexual frustration and pain. "He was worried that he'd pushed you too far."

She snorted and shook her head, tossing her long curls over her shoulders. "I don't scare that easy. He surprised me, but I didn't run away because he'd done anything wrong. None of them did anything wrong."

Shit. Hearing her talk about all of them like that caused my erection to press hard against the seam of my pants. Wait. What did she mean about all of them? The phrase could mean anything, but my mind conjured all sorts of intriguing options.

Having Emma in my office every day was going to try my patience. I'd never been cooped up with someone I desired like this.

Even watching her walk across the office turned me on. She had a quiet demeanor that I'd taken for a pushover when we first met. Now I wasn't so sure. She'd stood up to me on more than one occasion. It made me want her that much more.

"Good." I finally managed to force the word out. I adjusted myself behind the desk and propped my ankle on the opposite knee. "Can we get back to work then? Since you had a good time, and you're fine. There's nothing for me to worry about."

"Fine." She picked up the damp towel from my desk and tossed it into the trash can beside the door.

Her gaze darted to the door again when Derek's voice rose high enough to carry through the closed door. I should've left it open after she came in but being shoved in here together was a delicious torture. Anyone could walk in at any second. I stayed on my best behavior, even as I imagined Emma and Derek together this morning.

I yanked open the bottom left drawer in my desk and pulled out a red binder that had all our training sessions listed for the last year. We had another one coming up soon, and I had a few guys hoping to pass their qualifying tests to join our station.

Emma paced back to her desk and started sorting papers again. Her hair fell over her shoulder and she shoved it back with an annoyed huff. "I'm still missing a few pages. Do you have them?"

"They're under your desk." I looked up in time to see her roll her eyes and scoot the chair back. Her desk wasn't closed in on the sides like mine, so I had a front row seat to her creamy thighs as she bent over and retrieved the last flyaway pages.

Straightening, she tossed her hair again and eyed me from the side while organizing the book and placing it back on the shelf. The office wasn't anything special, and I'd never

enjoyed spending day after day in the cramped space until Emma walked in.

Shouting sounded from outside. I shoved to my feet and crossed to the door. Samuel and Derek roughhoused in the exercise room just off from the bay where we kept our truck. Derek laughed and ducked under Samuel's outstretched arm. He grabbed Samuel around the waist and threw him backward onto the wrestling mat. Despite being almost as old as me, Samuel acted more like one of the rookies. It was part of why I'd put him in charge of training all the new recruits. He was able to connect with them. And he knew how to train them to their absolute best. We were one of the best stations in the city thanks to Samuel.

Alex stood slightly apart from the duo. For the first time in weeks, he wore a slight smile instead of his perpetual frown. Thank goodness. I'd been about to start worrying about the kid. Samuel said it was because of the kid's recent breakup. It didn't surprise me he took it so hard. He was the quietest one of the group. What he felt, he felt deeply. Derek caught me watching and waved.

Samuel dusted off his hands and rammed Derek from behind. The move spun both men around. I closed the door and returned to my desk. Emma watched me with that same quiet curiosity I'd discovered earlier.

Another look crossed her face. She stood there in front of me without moving. "Derek said something this morning that he thought had hurt me?" She said it with a lilting tone that turned it into a question. "Did he say what, exactly, he thought offended me?"

I threaded my fingers together and rested my elbows on the desk. "He said he offered to share you with Samuel and Alex." Good God. Saying it out loud made it even sexier.

"Right. That. I noticed he didn't include you in there. Is there a reason for that?" She sounded so innocent. It was going to destroy me. She was my employee and completely off limits.

Which made the temptation that much worse. I wanted her with such a deep, visceral ache that I almost couldn't breathe past the agonizing thoughts of having her right here in my office.

The air crackled with tension that made the hairs on my arms stand straight up. "I'm not your type. We'll keep it at that."

She snorted and leaned over the desk. "I had a great time with Derek this morning. If you don't believe me, ask Samuel. Or Alex." Delight danced in her eyes when she glanced down and spotted my cock standing at attention. "Maybe I'm your type after all. Seems someone is enjoying this conversation."

"I'm your boss. We shouldn't be having this conversation." I left my hands on the desk. I didn't see the point in trying to hide my arousal from her when she'd already seen it.

She tipped her head and looked me over, her gaze lingering on my crotch.

"Wait." Her words registered and I met her earnest gaze. "What do you mean I can ask Samuel or Alex?"

Derek had said they talked about sharing, not that it had happened already.

Her grin widened into a full smirk. "Seems I'm not the little girl you think I am. I can handle myself." Her gaze roamed over my body again before she continued. "And you."

I stood and walked around the desk. She watched my every step, her breaths coming faster. I took her neck in my hands and brought her face up to meet mine. Our lips slammed together. I didn't wait to slip my tongue into her mouth and haul her body against mine. My hands found her ass and I squeezed it, hard.

She groaned and gripped my shoulders. Her breasts pressed into my chest, and I watched her eyes shutter closed when I slid my hand beneath her shirt and grazed the smooth skin along her back. I kissed her with all the pent-up hunger I'd felt since meeting her.

We were both breathless when I broke away. “Are you sure about that?”

“Yes,” she whispered before pulling my head down for another searing kiss. Her delicious lips moved against mine in a lingering kiss that pushed me over the edge.

I’d start off slow with her. She had no idea what I was capable of. One wrong move, or pushing her too fast early on, would end this before it ever started. I’d have to control myself. I was good at that, but Emma threatened my control with every swipe of her tongue against mine. I was going to have to test her reactions and see what she’d tolerate.

I pulled back and threaded my fingers through her hair. “If things get too intense, you tell me to stop. Okay? No matter what.”

“I trust you, Henry.” Four softly spoken words had never meant so much to me.

I needed her to understand. “That’s good, but I need to hear the words, Emma. Promise that you’ll tell me to stop if you need to.”

“I promise.” She kissed the side of my neck and ran her hand down my stomach and over my cock. “I promise that I’ll tell you if things get too intense. But it’s not going to happen. I need this. I need you.”

She unraveled me with every word.

I didn’t have any of my stuff here, but I’d make do. Maybe we could even play out my fantasy from yesterday. I stroked my belt with one hand while wrapping the other around her waist. I bent her backward and flicked the lock on the door.

“Let’s see if you can keep that pretty mouth shut.” I rubbed my thumb over her lips.

She sucked my finger into her mouth and bit the end.

“No one can know about this. I’ll lose my job.” I stared into her eyes and made sure she understood the reality of what was about to happen.

EMMA

Henry kept looking at me like he was trying to tell me something. But all I heard, all I felt, was the need to have him right here in the office. He'd been a grumpy bastard all morning.

Granted, there were a few times that I deserved him snapping at me. I was not about to back down now that I had him locked on me with the fullness of his dick straining toward me. His grouchiness made sense in a way. All the sexual tension I'd felt from him this morning culminated in this.

I was ready to do almost anything to get that disgruntled look off his face. His thumb worked over my mouth again, and I bit the tip for the second time.

"Fuck. You're going to get me in trouble." His breath rasped out as his hand tightened on my waist. "I'll start you off easy."

I nodded even as he took a step back.

"Get under the desk." He pointed at his heavy desk and pinched my ass. "Now."

What the hell was this all about? I opened my mouth to ask but snapped it shut when Henry glared at me.

"The only time you're allowed to open your mouth is when my dick is in it." He unzipped his fly and brought his cock out.

I'd never crawled so fast in my life. His words startled me at first, but I'd started this, and I'd damned well finish it. We were not supposed to be doing this. He was my boss. Anyone could catch us. He'd locked the door, but the alarm could call him out to a fire, or someone could knock and interrupt.

The knowledge that we might not get to finish made me want to hurry, but Henry sat in his chair and stroked his long shaft with one hand. He was not going to be persuaded to get on board with a quick and dirty sex session. Damn. I couldn't imagine him leaving me here without satisfaction, but maybe that was part of the kink. This was all new territory, and I couldn't separate the anxiety from the excitement.

I faced Henry from under the desk and placed my hands on his knees.

"I imagined you doing this the first time you dropped to your knees in here." He palmed his cock and rolled toward me. "Do you remember?"

I remembered. The look he'd given me had raised every hair on my body and made me ache with a desire I didn't understand. Henry was going to help me figure it out. I knew it as well as I knew I was going to love sucking that long cock.

He rolled closer, until his knees were on either side of my head and his body blocked me in. Thank fuck I wasn't claustrophobic. I dipped my head and ran my tongue over the head of his cock. Henry groaned his approval. "I imagined you sitting down there, sliding those beautiful lips over me and no one knowing."

My mouth was full of his head, stopping me from talking even if he had given me permission. I understood instinctively that control was part of what Henry wanted. He wanted to control me. I should be appalled, but I was too curious.

And I wasn't having any trouble getting turned on.

Henry fed me his dick inch by inch until I took as much as I could without gagging. Then he pushed further. Tears sprang into my eyes and I gagged around him, then pulled back.

I lapped my tongue over the underside of his shaft and used both hands to fist the hilt near his balls. When I recovered, I started over again, gradually working my way down him in long strokes until I gagged again. I couldn't fit all of him in my mouth. Even with both hands and my mouth. The impressive length tightened and swelled.

Henry gripped the sides of my head and worked me up and down in a series of quick, rapid bursts, then shoved past my gag reflex and into my throat. I groaned at the sensation and fought with my gag reflex to hold him in place.

“That’s it. You’re doing great, Emma. Just a little longer.” He thrust deeper. “Take it. You think you can’t, but you can.”

I opened my jaw and let him slide further inside.

He jerked his cock out of my mouth and rolled backward. “Get out.”

I thought I’d done something wrong and took a second to look at him as I crawled out from under the desk. He moved closer and yanked my shirt up over my head. Within seconds, he was tossing my shirt and bra onto his desk.

He stood, his eyes darkening as he watched me, and he stroked his erection before reaching for his belt. He pulled it loose with a series of pops and crooked a finger at me. “Hold out your wrists.”

Oh shit. We were really getting into it now. I held out both arms, and he looped the belt lightly around my wrists. “What’s this for?” I asked, then remembered I wasn’t supposed to talk.

He tsked and wagged his finger at me. “You broke the rules. Do you know what happens when you do that?”

I shook my head, and his grin turned positively feral.

“You get punished.” He pulled me to my feet, using the belt for leverage. He pinched my nipple hard enough to make me gasp, and a throb of heat settled in my pussy. Dipping his head, he pulled the nipple into his mouth and sucked until I moaned and arched toward him.

The minute I moved, he backed away with a wicked gleam in his eye. “I’m going to enjoy this. Next time, you’ll be allowed to use that perfect mouth for talking. And screaming. But you have to be quiet today.”

I brought my hands down to my lips and mimed zipping them closed.

The corners of his eyes crinkled as he smiled. “That’s my good girl. Now, let’s get you set up for the next part.” He glanced around at his desk, then at the wall behind him. “Here.” He grabbed the belt and secured it to a hook used for hanging their heavy coats.

The height stretched my body so that I was almost on my tiptoes.

Henry took a step back and tapped his finger against his lips. “Perfect.” His cock jutted out, and he was still fully clothed, but I’d never been more turned on. He reached out and ran his hands up my legs, gathering the skirt in both hands as he went. “I love these skirts.” He worked the material up to my hips, then ran a hand over my ass. He patted it lightly, testing me. When I moaned and rubbed my ass over his cock, he chuckled. “Damn me to hell for this. This one’s going to hurt. Don’t scream.”

His palm met my ass in a resounding smack that pulsed all the way to my core. I bit my lip to keep from screaming at the unique blend of pain and pleasure. My juices flowed down my legs and I clamped my thighs together. Henry bowed his body around mine. “I love having you in here all to myself. No one knows the filthy things I’m doing to you. But I can’t do everything I want, so I have to be satisfied with this.” He worked his knee between mine. “Spread your legs.”

The order came sharp and fast. I squeezed my legs together one last time, then widened my stance.

“More.” He tapped my feet, sliding them apart until the strain caused my arms to burn and my thighs to quiver. “Perfect.” He thrust his cock between my legs, gliding it over my slit without penetrating. His cock gathered my juices,

telling him how wet I was for him. I wanted him to fuck me, right here, right now.

The feel of his dick so close to my entrance made me whimper with wild desire. I tried to change the angle and tease him inside, but Henry twisted away. He smacked my ass again, then smoothed his hand over the stinging skin. “Your ass looks so good with my handprint on it. It turns a delicious shade of pink.” He palmed my hip, then slid his hand around to my pussy. “And this.” He cupped me hard and drove his cock in the space between his fingers. “This sweet pussy is hot for me. I’m going to fuck you, Emma. Do you want that?”

I spasmed around him, and another gush of juices ran out over Henry’s hand. I couldn’t take much more without coming all over him. It was all too different and delicious. It drove me wild. The thrill of the forbidden coursed through me. All I could think about was Henry’s cock and the pleasure he made me feel. I nodded savagely and almost melted into the floor when he pushed a thick finger into me.

“Soon.” He worked his finger in and out of me in long strokes. “See, there’s this thing that I love. It’s called edging.” He added another finger. “That’s when I take you right to the edge of an orgasm, then stop.”

His fingers stilled one thrust away from sending me over the edge. He gripped my hip to keep me from moving. The thickness of his fingers was a delicious agony. I wanted to come. I needed to explode with that rush of glorious freedom. Henry wouldn’t let me. Once the edge of my orgasm wore off, he pumped into me again, taking his time dragging his fingers along my walls. “When you do come, it will be so intense you’ll think you’ve died.” He pressed his thumb to my clit and stopped moving his fingers again. “This can go on for hours during a really good session. That’s what I’m capable of. I can give you pain and pleasure that will change everything you thought you knew about sex.”

My body was on fire and growing hotter with every word. Henry was promising me things I’d dreamed of but didn’t know how to achieve.

“But there’s a darkness in me, Emma. It goes far deeper than what I’m doing today. You need to know that before you agree to anything else from me.”

I heard his words, but I couldn’t process them right now. All I could do was feel him pushing me closer and closer to an edge that I didn’t understand but knew that I wanted. I’d meant it when I said I trusted him. Maybe I was foolish, but he inspired trust.

I dangled over the precipice of another orgasm and Henry stopped yet again. His fingers were nothing short of miraculous. They plucked and played my pussy and clit like an instrument he understood on every level.

He was a master at this game, and all I could do was enjoy the ride. His fingers left me completely. I angled my head to look over my shoulder and watched him raise his fingers to his mouth and lick them clean. His pants hung low on his hips, and seeing him like that—fully dressed but with his cock stretched taut while I was half-naked—twisted the forbidden fantasy to another level.

He reached over me and unhooked my hands from the wall. “You’re doing so good, Emma. I think you deserve a reward. And I can’t wait much longer to put my cock in that tight pussy. You’re going to squeeze me, and my length is going to go so deep inside you, you’re going to writhe with pleasure.”

Yes, please. God yes. I let my eyes and body do the talking, and Henry smiled at me while he pushed my back over his desk and lifted my legs around his waist. He bent at the waist and stroked his cock between my folds. The head hit my clit and I gasped.

Henry dipped his head and took a nipple between his teeth. He fondled the other breast, kneading it, then teasing the nipple to a diamond-hard peak.

I started to loop my arms over his neck, but he lifted his head out of reach. He used both hands to push my legs apart and then widened his stance. His cock was right there, mere inches separating us.

Henry looked straight at me and thrust forward. He seated himself to the hilt, filling me to capacity and almost sending me over the edge. My mouth opened in a silent scream, and I twisted my head, biting my lip. More. Fuck, I needed more.

Henry adjusted his stance and dragged his cock out so slowly that my body shook. He reentered me just as slowly, making the pleasure build with each delicious inch he fed into me. "Fuck you feel good." His mouth twisted and his grip on my legs tightened. "I'm going to let you come now, Emma. Remember, not a sound."

I threw my arms over my head and watched him fuck me. His entire face changed as he thrust into me. He was concentrated on my pussy, watching his cock slide in and out of my tight folds. I clenched my inner walls and he let out a ragged breath through pursed lips. This man who sought control was coming undone. Because of me. I took this big, powerful man, and reduced him to a quivering bundle of nerves that needed to come as badly as I did.

I knew then that I didn't care how dark Henry's kink went. I was more than willing to go along for the ride. His body convulsed and he increased his speed, driving into me harder and faster. The orgasm he'd denied me rushed in, swamping me in a tidal wave of bliss. I shoved Henry's belt between my teeth and bit down hard on the leather. My entire body stiffened, and I clamped down on his cock with all of my strength. I needed to feel him come inside me with a desperation that I should find frightening.

"Emma. Fuck. You're strangling my dick, and it feels so damned good. Keep doing it. Just like that. Oh, baby." He stiffened and let out a deep groan. His cock swelled and hot cum spurted inside me in wave after wave. I worked my hips over his cock in a slow wave, milking every last drop from him.

Henry stayed between my legs for several minutes. Our gasping breaths filled the office, and he unbound my hands before pulling his cock out and tucking it back in his pants. He scooped me up and cupped the back of my head, cradling me against his chest. "Did I hurt you?"

“No.” My voice sounded scratchy from holding back my screams. I cleared it and looked up at him from beneath my lashes. “I’m beginning to think that Derek was right.”

“About what?” He narrowed his eyes at me. “We just had sex and you want to talk about Derek?”

“Not exactly.” I gripped the front of his shirt and smirked. “Derek brought up the possibility of him, Alex, and Samuel sharing me. Alex had some interesting ideas on how that might work.” I waited a heartbeat before I continued. “I’d like to see what else you can do. If you’re willing.” I wanted to have my choice of all of them. I knew that what Henry had done to me today was just the beginning.

And the possibility of more was too delicious to ignore.

ALEX

What was I thinking? I scrubbed both hands down my face and around the back of my neck. I knew better than to agree to meet my ex. I also knew she wouldn't stop until she got what she wanted. Whatever the fuck that might be this time.

Samuel walked past me carrying a hose over one shoulder. He gave me a look in passing, a silent question that asked what was the matter. I frowned and refused to break down over something as simple as seeing my ex again. We'd never get back together. I didn't *want* us to get back together.

After what I'd seen with Emma this morning, I had other dreams now. I'd seen what it could be like between two people, and I refused to settle for less ever again. I ground my teeth and reconsidered. Things with Danielle were great in the beginning. I'd thought she was the one. Didn't I owe it to myself to try and work things out?

We deserved a chance at happily ever after. I'd only known Emma for less than three days. I couldn't pass up a sure thing for the delicious idea that Derek and Emma presented.

I glanced at the clock on my way to the equipment room to check our equipment. Not even noon. Could this day go any slower?

A noise from Henry's office drew my attention that way. The door had been closed all morning. That wasn't unusual. Henry often closed the door when he had a lot of paperwork to

catch up on. But something about the closed door with Emma and Henry in there together made my nerves prickle.

“Here.” Derek shoved a coat at me. “This one’s torn. We need a replacement on the truck.”

“I’m supposed to be checking the equipment.” I caught the coat before it hit the floor.

Derek shrugged. “You’ve been busy moping around this morning. Thought I’d take care of it for you.”

The hours stretched into infinity before my shift ended. I checked my phone and grimaced at the message from Danielle saying she’d meet me behind the fire station at eleven.

I tossed the coat back at Derek. “Here. Since you decided to do my job today, you can be the one to tell Henry you need a replacement.”

Derek scowled and looked toward the office but skulked that way without a word.

Good. Now I just had to get outside without Samuel growing suspicious. He’d hung around me all morning, like he was waiting on me to fall apart. I wasn’t that fragile. Looking over my shoulder and grabbing the overflowing trash from the can, I tied it up and headed out back. The bag got me outside the station without suspicion.

Danielle popped around the corner almost right away. She’d obviously been out here waiting for me. “Why didn’t you come inside?” I motioned at the thickly falling snow. “Warmer in there.”

Danielle buffed her arms, then hopped around. Her petite frame barely put her to my armpit, and her delicate features flushed with the cold. She had a pert, upturned nose and a willowy body that I’d loved for three years. I knew every inch of her body, and her expressions. I’d been right that she wanted something. Her gaze caught mine and she licked her lips. “You’re looking good.”

“What do you want?” I practically growled the words in her face, leaning in close so she couldn’t misunderstand my anger. I’d managed to keep it under control until I saw her. All

my rage boiled up and spilled over. “Unless you’re here to apologize...”

She wrenched backward, her arms snapping over her chest. “I didn’t come here to fight.”

No, but she sure as shit came for something. I intended to find out what. Looking at her, I realized that everything I’d been feeling culminated in this moment. I had a decision to make. We could try and go back to how things were, or not.

“What do you need, Danielle?” Her name still rolled off my tongue with that honeyed sweetness that made it linger. I wanted her, and if she offered, I’d take her back and pick up right where we left off.

My emotions rampaged from hot to cold and back again. I’d thought I knew what I wanted, but having her standing in front of me tore me up inside.

Danielle closed the distance between us and slipped her arms around my neck. “I missed you, Alex.”

“Yeah?” I gripped her forearms and touched my forehead to hers. “Because the last time we were together, you told me I was pathetic, and you had to force yourself to have sex with me. Out of pity.”

“I didn’t mean it.” She rubbed her palms over my scalp. “You want me to prove it to you?”

Did I? I hesitated long enough that she took it as consent and reached beneath my pants.

“Wait.” I stepped out of reach and crossed my arms. “Tell me why you really came here. Why did you sound like something was wrong in your texts? You couldn’t even wait until I got off work.”

She pouted prettily and tipped her head to the side in the way she knew I loved. “I’m really sorry. I didn’t want to ask you, but I’m desperate.”

“Okay.” I tightened my grip on my emotions, tugging them down deep where she couldn’t hurt me anymore.

“I need money. My rent’s due and my new job isn’t paying as much as they promised.” She waved a hand and ran it through her blonde hair.

I’d almost expected something like this. I hated to be negative about every interaction, but I’d known something was off in the way she reached out. A few weeks ago, I would have been heartbroken if she wanted nothing more than money. Her offer of sex had been nothing more than a prelude to this. Fucking shit. Like I owed her any part of my body. Or my money. I owed her nothing. Especially after the way she treated me and then ended things with nothing but hateful words. To come back now and say she hadn’t meant them? It wasn’t enough.

I withdrew into the vault of indifference I’d wrapped around my heart after our breakup. “Find some other guy to hustle. I’m done.”

I must truly be unlovable. I turned my back on her and walked away.

“Alex, you can’t do this.” Danielle hurried after me but stopped just short of the door leading inside.

“I just did.” Nothing mattered but getting away from her. The cold air bit into my skin, causing goosebumps to erupt. I’d gone out without my coat and beanie, and the cold seeped in deep. Even my heart had frozen over. I was an impenetrable wall of ice.

Danielle grabbed my arm and tried to pull me back. “Please. I’ll do anything. I need the money.”

“Sorry. You lost access to my wallet when you told me that you’d been faking orgasms for a year.” I shook her off.

“You really don’t want to tell me no.” A hint of despair and sheer meanness entered her voice.

I didn’t turn around, didn’t want to see her face. “What else could you do to hurt me? I’m done.” I wrenched open the narrow metal door and stepped into the fire station.

Danielle hissed my name a few more times but remained outside. She used to come in here all the time. I thanked

whatever gods existed that she stayed out. If Samuel saw her skulking around, he'd have a fit.

Emma walked out of Henry's office and every synapse in my brain locked onto her flushed cheeks and the *just-had-sex* glow radiating off her skin. Fucking shit. She had sex with Henry. In his office. During working hours. What was this woman doing to us? She ran a hand through her hair, pulling it over her shoulder and continuing to thread her fingers through the long locks.

Jealousy raged as I watched her fix her hair and dart into the bathroom. Muscles bunched and flexed. Did I confront Henry? Nah. It wouldn't solve anything and would probably make everything worse. Henry was welcome to do whatever he wanted. If he wanted to fuck Emma on company time, then it was not my concern. Not even if he'd fire me for doing the same thing. The jealous rage flared brighter. Henry and Derek both had sex with Emma today. In most situations, I'd be concerned about the woman's intentions. But not Emma. I'd watched her this morning, and nothing about her concerned me except for how easily she muddled my head and made me want her too.

Could I have sex with her? She'd looked open to it this morning. I wasn't over Danielle, but Emma might be a nice distraction to get me back on my feet again. Wait. No. I couldn't do that. I couldn't use Emma for sex because I was horny and lonely. That's not the kind of man I wanted to be. Even if this Emma thing was temporary and we all agreed, I wasn't the type of guy who banged and bailed.

Damn my thoughts for always running in circles and never giving me any peace. I wanted Emma. I should be allowed to sink into the oblivion of sex as long as all involved parties knew the end goal. I wasn't looking for another relationship. People had casual sex all the time. There was no reason I couldn't try it for myself.

First, I had to talk to Emma and find out if she was interested in me.

Derek and Henry talked in Henry's open doorway. Looking at Henry, I wouldn't know anything was different. Until I really took my time and examined the captain. He had a looseness about him that I'd never seen before.

The typical tight face and pinched expression had given way to a relaxed posture and an almost grin that definitely wasn't a frown but something closer to a casual smirk.

I made my way toward the bathroom right as the door opened and Emma stepped out. She'd fixed her smudged makeup and brushed her hair. Her lips quirked up in a bright smile when she saw me. "Hey, Alex."

"Emma." I propped my shoulder on the wall and crossed my arms. "Had a good morning?"

Pink that had nothing to do with her makeup filled her cheeks.

"Alex, drills." Samuel called out from behind me.

I waved at him. "In a minute." I'd gathered my nerve and intended to ask Emma about us.

Samuel grabbed my arm and pulled. "You can talk to Emma later. We need to run drills now."

Samuel's grip was impossible to break, but I still yanked my arm back and snarled at him even as he hauled me to the far side of the fire truck. "What the hell, Samuel?"

Samuel looked past me, toward where I'd left Emma. "Maybe give her a minute before you go asking her to ride your hose. I know we're both anxious to be next in line, but we don't want to scare her off."

"She had sex with Henry, you know that, right?" I pointed toward Henry's office, where Henry stepped back and let Emma walk past him into the office.

Henry's gaze never left Emma. I could practically see the wheels churning in Henry's mind. He closed the door, and the muffled sound shot through me. Did he lock the door? Was he planning on banging her again right under our noses?

Samuel shoved a firehose at me. “I know. And that means she needs some time to think. Henry isn’t like us. I’m not telling you not to go after her. Hell, I plan on climbing into bed with her as soon as I get a chance.”

I considered what he’d said and how he’d brought up Henry. “What do you mean Henry’s not like us?”

Samuel shook his head. “Trust me, if you need to know, I’ll tell you. If this whole sharing thing gets to that level.” He shrugged. “Focus on the job while we’re on the job. You can talk to Emma all you want when we’re off duty.”

“Henry fucked her in his office,” I hissed in a low breath. “But I can’t even talk to her?”

“It’s jacked, I admit it.” He threw his arms up. “Do what you want, but I’m trying to help.”

Like always. Samuel was always looking out for me. I looked toward Henry’s office one last time. Nothing moved and no sounds drifted through the thick walls. I ground my teeth together and nodded once. “Fine.”

I’d wait to talk to Emma. But the next time we were in the apartment together, we were going to have a discussion. If she agreed that we could do this without feelings getting involved, then I’d consider giving in to my desire for her.

EMMA

I'd never had a workday like this one. Which was probably a good thing. I mean, I really shouldn't go around fucking my bosses. Henry was the exception. I couldn't wait to be with him again. What other stuff might he make me do? I still felt the power of him between my legs and tasted him on my tongue. I'd never had a sexual experience like that. It opened up all sorts of new fantasies. Derek's idea of sharing was growing on me by the minute.

"Go home, Emma." Henry tapped his watch and looked at me from the side.

I stood in a smooth motion that belied the tension gripping me. "What about you?"

He gathered up another of the endless stacks of paper. "I'll be here a while longer."

What if I offered to stay? I started to ask, but then stopped. I'd had sex twice today already. I shouldn't push my luck. Being with two guys, combined with Henry's unique needs, had made me slightly sore, and all I wanted was to go home and soak in a warm bath.

I gathered up my purse and coat, then stopped by Henry's desk. "Thank you. For this morning. I had fun." Please say we would do it again sometime. My thoughts screamed at me to invite him into the tub with me. That would mean inviting him to come to Derek and Alex's apartment. Probably not the best idea. I rolled my lips together and headed toward the door, giving him a little wave on my way out.

“I’ll see you soon.” Henry’s husky voice followed me out the door.

I shivered in delight and tugged my coat over my shoulders. Flipping my hair out of the collar, I scanned the building in search of Derek or Samuel. Or even Alex. I hadn’t seen any of them since Alex stopped to talk earlier. I wasn’t sure if they were avoiding me or if this was their normal day. The thought of going back to their apartment by myself didn’t appeal so I walked to my grandma’s house instead.

A brisk wind kicked up, sending flurries of snow scampering across the sidewalks and into the recently salted roads. I’d have to consider taking a cab before long, but right now I enjoyed the walk. It left me with my memories of the morning playing on repeat. And what delicious memories they were. I felt myself grinning and realized people meeting me on the sidewalk were smiling back. They had no idea what filthy things I had on my mind. I laughed behind my gloved hand and crossed the street.

Grandma stood in the open door, kissing her boyfriend. Whoops. I paused at the end of the drive and waited for them to finish their goodbye. Once he was in his car and backing out into the street, Grandma looked up and caught me standing there like a dork. She waved and grinned. “Come on in, honey.”

That’s what I loved about Grandma. She was never too busy for me and always made me feel welcome. A sudden rush of guilt swamped me. What was I doing, having sex with Derek this morning? That was bad enough, but then I’d gone and tempted Henry until he had sex with me too. What did that make me? Was I a sexual deviant?

Oh God. What if I was a sexaholic?

I’d let Samuel and Alex watch me have sex, and I’d enjoyed it. I’d enjoyed it way too much for my own good. Even worse, I was considering letting them share me.

“You going to stand out there all day or come in here and tell me what’s wrong?” Grandma planted her hands on her

hips and glared at me until I hurried forward and crossed into the kitchen.

“How’d you know something’s wrong?” I asked as I sat in the kitchen chair and poured a cup of tea. I must’ve stood out there longer than I realized if she’d had time to set up for tea.

Grandma snorted. “Lord, Emma. You wear worry like a shawl. It’s obvious on your face. You looked fine at first, but I watched it come over you like a bad storm.”

“It’s kind of a personal thing.” I hedged toward the conversation and took a sip of my tea. “You might not be comfortable talking about it.”

“Must be about sex, then.” She sat easily in her chair and poured her tea then swirled honey into the cup. “I’ve heard more than my share of stories. All those years as a nurse, I reckon. Probably not much you could say to shock me nowadays.”

If she expected her words to shock me, they did. I straightened and wrapped both hands around my cup. Words jumbled up together to the point that I had trouble getting a single one out.

“Those firefighters have you torn up good. Which one is it?” She leaned forward and lowered her voice. “Have you had sex with one of them?”

Tea sloshed over the rim of my cup and ran down my hand. I spluttered and spewed tea. “What makes you ask that?”

“Mm-hmm. You did.” That devilish gleam entered her eyes. “How was it? Are you upset cause it was terrible?”

“It wasn’t terrible.” I cleaned up the spilled tea and poured myself a fresh cup. “I had sex with two of them this morning. At different times.”

Grandma’s entire face lit up in a smile. “Two of them? Well, I’ll be snookered.”

“Is something wrong with me?” I blurted out the question, then regretted it.

“Not a thing.” She tapped her finger into my arm. “And if anyone says different, then you ignore it. Did one of those men tell you that?” Her ire rose with every second. Much more and she’d march right down to the station and tell them all off.

“No.” I hurried to reassure her. “But why can’t I be satisfied with just one of them? Why do I want so much more?”

“Honey, as long as you’re all consenting adults and everyone knows the expectations and agrees, then there’s nothing wrong with having multiple partners.” She swirled her tea around in her cup and met my eyes in her no-nonsense way. “I wish I’d taken the chance to be more adventurous.”

I arched a brow, encouraging her to continue.

“Love and lust are two different things, dear. I loved your grandfather with my whole heart. But there was a time before him when I had the opportunity to fall hard and fast for two other men. I turned them down, knowing how society would look on me.” She frowned into her tea. “When you’re as old as me and you’re looking back on your life, will you regret telling them no?”

“Yes.” I knew it with every fiber of my being, without knowing how I knew. This was what I needed to do. But uncertainty kept horning in on my visions of Derek and Henry.

Grandma scooted to the end of her seat and held my hand between hers. “You mentioned there were four? Do you want to sleep with all of them at the same time?”

“Grandma!” My spine slammed into the back of the chair. The words were scandalous, even if I had been thinking along those lines myself.

Her generous laugh spilled out. “The look on your face.” She kept laughing and slapping her knee for several minutes while I stirred my tea and tried not to smile. Finally, her laughter eased and she swiped at the tears rolling down her face. “I’m sorry, honey. Didn’t mean to embarrass you.” She sobered and patted my hand again. “Even if you do, it’s fine. Do what you want.”

Do what I want. I chewed on those words while she sipped on another cup of tea. “Does that make me a slut?”

“No.” Grandma’s voice was firm and certain. Her smile dropped and she looked at me sternly. “There’s no such thing as a slut. That’s a word men made up to make women feel inferior. Nothing about a woman’s sexual appetite is wrong. Just because some men don’t know how to please a woman, they come up with a way to demean us. Not you, honey.”

Talking to Grandma helped more than I imagined. That was why I’d come here, though I didn’t really expect us to get this deep into the conversation.

“Do you really think it’s possible for men to share a woman?” Now that we were talking, I couldn’t seem to stop. “I mean, I had sex with Derek. And then later with Henry. Henry knew I’d been with Derek.” I told her the rest of it, how Alex had mentioned the sharing thing. I didn’t go into details about everything he said, but Grandma had a vivid imagination. She’d already brought up the big thing. Sex with four men. At the same time. My body burned with anticipation and the *what-ifs* of the scenario. What would they all do?

“That all depends on the men.” Grandma shrugged and stood. She began gathering up the teacups and teapot.

I helped her wash everything while thinking it over. She made sense, but I still wasn’t convinced. I couldn’t see those four men in the same room, naked with me. One at a time, maybe. It took a shitload of confidence to be in the room with another man while he fucked a woman. Samuel and Alex had already been in that position. They hadn’t seemed to mind.

That would change. It couldn’t be natural, even to them. They’d get tired of it all and decide I wasn’t worth it. Could I enjoy the moment and not expect anything more?

“Thanks.” I gave her a tight hug and she kissed my cheek.

“You do what you need to do. Don’t ever let anyone make you feel ashamed for what you need.” Grandma pinched my cheeks and her weathered face creased in a gentle smile. Her house hummed with a quiet solace that I’d always found

comforting. I almost wanted to stay here and not go back to the apartment, but I patted her shoulders one more time and left feeling better than when I'd arrived.

My thoughts went with me all the way from Grandma's to Derek's apartment. The streets had grown busier while I was at Grandma's, and several cars zoomed up and down the street. I moved to the far side of the sidewalk when a fast-moving truck threw slush over the curb. It landed inches from my feet. I turned and glared after the truck, but the driver ignored me.

"Whatever." I huffed and turned into the parking lot, jingling Derek's key in my hand.

When I turned the corner, I spotted Alex ahead of me. His back was tense beneath his jacket, and he walked with heavy steps that thudded dully on the thick carpet.

I hurried to catch up, calling out to him as I approached. "Hey, Alex. You're home early."

Shit. I shouldn't call it home. This isn't my home.

Alex's muscles tightened, his shoulders coming up around his ears. He stopped and turned, bringing his profile into view. "I'm off twenty-four-hour shifts for a while. Henry has us on some weird, holiday schedule while he trains some new recruits." That same jaw muscle ticked a steady beat. He looked different from when we'd talked at the station. He'd been almost cordial then, but this side of Alex was back to the reclusive, almost angry version. What happened to make him flip?

"Well, I'm glad you're here. I was about to cook dinner. Is there anything you'd like me to fix?" It was all a lie. I'd had no intention of cooking until I saw Alex. I didn't want to impress him exactly, but I wouldn't mind figuring out a way to make him smile again.

"Don't, Emma." He held up a hand in a stop motion. "Whatever it is that you're doing, stop."

"I'm not doing anything. I was trying to be nice." I reached past him and unlocked the door.

He held it open for me, his palm planted in the center of the door. The move put us nose to nose. His smoky gray eyes stared into me, searching for who knew what. He didn't seem to find it and eventually let out a loud sigh that fluttered the hair around my face.

“I'm not going to sit around and watch you cook.” He placed his hand in the small of my back and urged me into the room. “I'll help, but only if you don't pester me about what's wrong.”

Oh, gruff Alex was sexy. I'd find out what he was angry about eventually. In the meantime, I planned on enjoying watching his sexy ass cook.

SAMUEL

I was getting too old for these twenty-four-hour shifts. I loved them too much to let them go, though. I couldn't imagine any other job. Being a firefighter was my life. More than that, it was my whole identity. I'd tried to instill that love in Alex, but God only knew if it worked.

The poor guy missed his ex, but after that conversation they'd had yesterday, I didn't think he'd miss her much longer. If he did at all. I hated that he'd been put in that position with Danielle. I'd never liked her, but I was Alex's mentor. That didn't give me the right to tell him who to date.

Dragging on my jacket, I waved at Henry. I was wrapping up my twenty-four-hour shift, and he should be right behind me. Alex and Derek would get back in the full rotation as soon as we got the new recruits sorted out.

"Where are you off to in such a rush?" Henry buttoned his coat and tucked his scarf into the front. The man was fastidious about almost everything. Which made it all the crazier that he'd had sex with Emma in his office, right under our noses.

I almost asked him about it, but I didn't want to cause a fuss. It was obvious to anyone with eyes that he'd screwed Emma. Even if I couldn't prove it, one look at her when she left his office and I'd known. So had Alex. I was happy for him in a weird way. Henry didn't often let loose, especially when it came to sex.

He opened the gray metal door and preceded me out of the building.

I left my coat open so I'd get the full effect of the winter air. The breeze caught Henry's hair and sent it standing straight up. He smoothed it back down with one hand and waited for me to start walking. He wouldn't stop until he got an answer. Even if he had to follow me all the way to the apartment. He was a good captain and a man I respected.

"Going to check on Alex." I didn't bring up what happened between Henry and Emma yesterday. It was none of my business unless he and Emma made it my business. If she agreed to the sharing thing, then I might have to get used to having Henry around even more often. Like we didn't already see each other eighty percent of the time anyway. "He had a rough day yesterday."

Henry frowned. "Anything I should know about?"

"Nope. Just a problem with his ex." I left out the full scope of the problem and that Danielle had been at the station. Henry didn't need to know that she was still sniffing around after Alex. We all knew the woman was bad news. The faster she found someone new and let Alex go, the better. I'd hoped that running drills afterward helped him get rid of the anger, but I wouldn't be sure until I checked on him.

Henry kept pace beside me. We were roughly the same age, and with our salt and pepper hair, people often mistook us for family. I usually laughed it off. I was taller, broader, more muscular, and incredibly tan where Henry had the pasty look of someone who spent a lot of time in an office. But I could see why people tried to connect us. He and I had been in the same station together for twenty years. We were like brothers. Same with me and Alex, even though Alex hadn't been around as long. I loved that kid like a brother. Henry and Derek too. We made an odd family, but it worked for us.

Family. Huh. What about Emma? She was new to all of us, but she already fit in like we'd always known her. She was another reason I headed toward Alex's apartment. I knew she'd likely be there. She'd avoided answering us about the

whole sharing thing. I didn't plan on pinning her down and demanding an answer, but maybe she was ready to talk about it.

Henry and I parted ways a block away from the fire station. He climbed into his car while I kept walking. The brisk air and sprinkling snow created a Christmas atmosphere that I'd been trying to avoid. Christmas wasn't exactly my favorite time of the year, but I had a feeling this year was going to be different. Emma made everything feel different. It made no sense, but I wasn't about to waste time worrying about it.

I knocked on Alex's door and then twisted the handle and walked in. Would I walk into another situation like I'd encountered yesterday? I almost hoped so.

Emma looked up and smiled at me from a stool pulled up to the kitchen island. Bright light flooded over her, highlighting her dark curls and bringing a flush to her skin. She wore black shorts with a black sweatshirt that came down past her hands. The shorts revealed her creamy thighs, and the sight instantly turned me on. I loved the sight of those legs. She sat with her ankles crossed, her toes on the bottom rung.

Alex stood at the stove with a kitchen towel over one shoulder. He flipped something in the skillet and it sizzled.

"Hey." Alex nodded in a quick jerk of his head.

"What's going on?" I crossed to the stool beside Emma and dragged it across the floor. The feet scraped and Alex's shoulders tensed.

Emma leaned toward me and cupped a hand around her mouth like she was about to share a secret. "Alex is cooking. I offered to help, but he shot me down."

Alex growled over his shoulder. "Because you burned the burgers last night when I left you alone for five minutes."

"In my defense, your stove cooks hotter than mine." She shrugged and pulled her shirt cuffs down over her hands, tucking them into her palms before folding her arms on the

counter and bouncing her knees up and down. “They were only on medium. I didn’t think they’d burn that fast.”

“You shot her down for that?” I winked at Emma and leaned in close. “I’d never shoot you down. No matter what you asked.”

Her gaze traveled over my face, drifted down to my lips, and then shot back up again. Pink colored her cheeks and she covered them with her hands. The black sweatshirt just made her look that much more adorable.

Alex grumbled under his breath but never turned around. He reached across to the back burner and grabbed the second skillet.

“Alex, wait!” I shouted a split second too late after realizing he was reaching for a cast iron skillet without an oven mitt.

“Fucking shit.” Alex cursed and yanked his hand back. The skillet scraped across the stove but didn’t fall as Alex slammed his hand to his chest and cursed until he ran out of breath.

Emma jumped up from her stool and ran around the counter. “Let me see.” She held out her hand and wiggled her fingers. “How bad is it?”

“It’s fine.” Alex kept his fingers curled together. The fingers of his other hand wrapped around the wrist of his injured hand. His knuckles were bone white and even from where I sat, I could see his hand shaking.

He was lying through his teeth.

“Alex, let me see.” Emma touched the back of his good hand.

He yanked away from her, wrenching so far to the side that he almost crashed into the stove.

I stood and made my way slowly toward him, sliding into the space closest to the stove. “Easy. She’s just trying to help.”

“Yeah, well. What if I don’t want her help?” Alex took another step back. “Keep your fucking hands to yourself. I

don't need anything from you."

"Fuck you, Alex." Emma slammed her palm down on the counter and held out the other one. "Get over your fucking self and show me your damned hand. I worked in a doctor's office. I know what I'm doing." She glared at him without flinching. "Give me your hand. Now."

Whoa. Hot mama alert. Seeing this side of Emma came as a complete shock. I'd seen her soft and sexy side with Derek, but this version... whew. She turned me on like nobody's business. I couldn't remember the last time a woman gave me a hard-on so fast. Blood pumped to my dick in a rush that left me dizzy.

I'd come here to check on Alex and test the waters with Emma. Now I knew for sure that I needed in on the action. If she'd have me.

Alex huffed and grunted like a caveman, but he stretched out his hand, placing it in her upturned palm.

Emma's quiet caring showed a nurturing side I hadn't expected. She winced while looking over Alex's hand. "It's a decent burn. Doesn't look like you'll need to go to the hospital. I'll get the first aid kit."

When she released his hand, Alex took his time drawing it back to his chest. His gaze followed Emma all the way across the apartment until she disappeared.

"Dude." I finished cooking the chicken in the skillet and turned off the stove.

Alex looked back at me briefly before turning back to watch for Emma's return. I didn't blame him. She was a sight, the way her face scrunched in sympathy, and the gentle way she touched Alex. It warmed me to see her taking care of him like this. He should have someone who cared for him. Not that bitch Danielle.

Emma checked the burn again, cleaned it, then applied ointment and wrapped Alex's hand in a strip of clean gauze. "There." She patted his forearm and kissed his wrist. "I can't make it instantly better, but that should help."

Alex flexed his hand and rubbed his thumb over the gauze. His gaze turned thoughtful, and he met Emma's hopeful expression with a rueful half-grin. "Thanks. Sorry for being a jerk."

"Eh." She waved a hand. "Not the first time I've been cussed out for trying to help."

"Excuse me?" I plated up the food and carried it over to the counter, then motioned for them to sit and eat.

Alex's eyes narrowed and he gave Emma a long look. He looked positively murderous at the thought of anyone cussing at our Emma. "Do you remember their name?" he asked.

Emma gave him a cheeky grin. "Yes. But I'm not telling you. HIPAA law."

Alex started to say something else, then seemed to change his mind. He dropped onto the stool and ran his good hand over his head in slow, soothing strokes.

Emma looked me over and tipped her head to the side. "Do you want something to eat?" She pointed at her plate. "Or is there something you need?"

"You could say that." I pressed my palms into the edge of the counter and leaned toward her.

"Oh?" She wiggled her eyebrows and lowered her voice to a stage whisper. "Do you need something taken care of?" Her gaze dropped to my belt and her tongue darted out between her lips.

This woman. She likely had no idea the effect she had on me.

I didn't bother hiding my erection as I smiled and raised my palms. "That depends on you, sweetheart."

"Hmm." The look in her eyes was utter devilry and playful abandon. She propped her elbows on the counter on either side of her plate and dropped her chin into her hands.

The bulge in my pants grew hotter with every look she shot my direction. Her lips puckered in a perfect O, and she drummed her pink nails on her cheeks while watching me. She

waited for me to say it, and I obliged. “I’d like to have sex with you.”

Alex dropped his fork. It hit his plate with a clang and bounced, skidding across the counter. “You came here to ask Emma to have sex?”

“Something like that.” I knew he wouldn’t want me to admit I came to check on him. So I left that part out.

Emma’s brows drew together slightly as her foot jiggled up and down on the stool.

No time like the present to come right out and ask her. It’d been on my mind all day and kept me awake most of the night. If she said no, then at least I had an answer. What was the worst that could happen?

Alex picked up his fork and started to eat. He seemed oblivious to the need growing between me and Emma. That or he was ignoring it. I’d seen his reaction to her touch, though. The boy was hurting something fierce. He wanted Emma.

“Here’s the thing.” I looked deep into her eyes and prayed this turned out well for all of us. “Alex needs you too.”

Her gaze darted over to Alex, taking him in with a slow sweep of those intelligent brown eyes.

“The fuck?” Alex muttered.

I forged ahead. “Have you thought about what we said? I said you could come to any of us, but do you think you could handle both of us?” I pointed at myself, then at Alex, and back to myself.

My pulse jumped when Emma didn’t answer right away. Had I misjudged the situation? She wanted me, that had been obvious since we met. And I’d thought she wanted Alex. Maybe it was the idea of having both at the same time?

She’d already had Derek and Henry, this seemed like the logical next step.

ALEX

“**Y**ou don’t make calls like that for me.” I shoved my plate aside and pushed to my feet. I couldn’t believe the nerve it took for him to tell Emma that shit. He put me on the spot, and I didn’t care for it one bit. My dick had other ideas, and it pulsed hard as thoughts of sex with Emma took hold. I sank back onto the stool and dropped my arm across my lap.

Emma looked back and forth between us, a tiny line between her eyes showing her surprise and concern. I’d burned myself while trying to figure out how to approach her about sex. Then Samuel came in and blurted it out like it was nothing more than asking how she liked her coffee. Which was with lots of cream and sugar. I figured that out yesterday.

I wanted to have sex with Emma, but not when it sounded like they were making a sacrifice to include me.

“It’s true.” Samuel turned that impenetrable gaze my way and held out both hands. “Sorry to blurt it out like that, but I thought she should know.”

“It’s not your decision.” I pointed at him, and then at Emma. “Or yours. If I want to have sex, then I’ll say so. Don’t talk about me like I’m not here.”

I’d thought Samuel respected me, but this showed that maybe I was wrong.

“Okay. Jeez.” Samuel shucked his coat and tossed it onto the coat rack behind the door.

Emma's eyes followed the motion, and her already flushed face deepened from pink to red. What was that all about?

He rolled up his sleeves and started washing the dishes. "Forget I said anything, if that's how you want to play it."

I shifted on the stool, trying to hide my erection from Emma. "That's how I want to play it. No offense, Emma."

She shrugged. "It's fine. I would never try to make you have sex with me." Her gaze dropped to my lap and her lips twitched. "But that erection is telling a different story." She tapped her fingers on her cheeks again. "Which one is real, and which is the lie?"

"I can be horny but not want to have sex." I rolled my eyes and then pinned Samuel with a glare. "Not everyone understands that."

"Hmm." Emma dropped her hands to the counter and stood. "Okay. In that case, I need you to look me in the eye and answer me." She palmed my cheek and turned my head to face her. "Do you want to have sex with me right now?"

Shit. Fucking damn. I let out a slight groan at the feel of her skin against mine. She was so soft. My cock tightened and I answered her with a nod. "Yes."

"Okay then." Her quiet voice and gentle touch helped eliminate the fears Danielle had instilled. Emma took my good hand and pulled, asking me to stand. She held out her other hand to Samuel. "I've never done anything like this before."

"None of us have," Samuel answered before I could. His smile grew wider with every step closer to Emma's bedroom.

We entered the small space and stopped. Emma let go of our hands and closed the door. "How does this work?"

Samuel cupped Emma's cheek and stroked his thumb over her chin. "Why don't we start here and see where that leads us?" He kissed her long and deep.

I felt out of place and unnecessary until Emma broke off the kiss and backed toward the bed. She reached for the hem of her sweatshirt and pulled it over her head. Her bare nipples

shone, the peaked nipples begging to be touched. Her shirt hit the floor and I moved in. I hooked my fingers in the hem of her shorts and stopped her from yanking them off. Her palms landed on my chest, then slid beneath the edge of my t-shirt. She skated her hands over my abs, gathering up my shirt as she went until she had it up over my shoulders. I dipped my head and let her remove my shirt and add it to the pile of clothes.

Samuel crawled onto the bed and cupped Emma's breasts from behind. She sucked in a gasp and arched backward. He freed one breast, and I bent my head close enough to pull the nipple into my mouth.

"Alex." The way she breathed my name jolted through my whole body. "Samuel." She cradled my head between her hands and worked her fingers through my hair and over my upper back. Her nails scraped just enough to make me shiver, and I increased my pressure on her nipple until she arched again.

Samuel dipped one hand beneath her shorts and fingered her. Delicious sounds left her mouth. Soft moans and pants that pushed both of us to work harder to please her. We'd never done this before, but working as a team on fires meant that I knew him. I couldn't anticipate what he'd do next, but he made it easy to adjust to each change.

Samuel shoved a knee between Emma's legs and she ground her pelvis over his thigh while his fingers continued to stroke her. Her hands dove out of my hair and went straight for my cock. She stroked me hard and fast, pumping both hands over me.

"I have an idea." Samuel's voice came out in a low growl.

"What?" Emma panted back.

I lifted my head, replacing my mouth with my hands. I rubbed my palm over her nipple and teased the hard peak.

Samuel kissed the side of Emma's neck, and she rolled her hips over his hand with a groan. "You both feel so good. I want one of you in my mouth."

“Good.” Samuel smiled and pulled his fingers out of her pussy. “Because I need a taste of that sweet pussy.”

Emma’s eyes popped wide, and I watched her try to mentally maneuver us into a position that worked.

“Get on the bed on your back, Samuel.” I’d already thought this one through. I knew exactly what to do. “Let Emma ride your face and she can suck me at the same time.”

“Damn.” Samuel shot me an appreciative look. “Fuck yes. Let’s do that.”

“Are you sure?” Emma chewed on her lip and looked down at herself. Bright splotches of color bloomed on her cheeks.

“What’s wrong?” Samuel tipped her chin up and kissed the corner of her mouth.

She trembled at the touch and swallowed hard. “I’m not... used to anyone having their mouth down there. Derek did it, and it was amazing, but I was on my back. My legs...”

“What about these gorgeous legs?” Samuel rubbed a hand down her thigh. “I can’t wait to have them clamped down on my face, holding me tight as you come on my tongue.”

“Are you sure?” She shook again. Her hands were still around my cock, but she’d slowed her stroking as we talked.

“What are you afraid of, Emma?” I brushed her hair back from her face and met her eyes. “You can tell us anything, honey. If you don’t like getting eaten out, then we won’t do it.”

“It’s not that.” She rushed to answer, which told me she did like getting her pussy licked. So, what was the problem. “I don’t want to hurt you.” Her voice whispered out. “I might be too heavy.”

Samuel stood, lifting her into his arms and turning her around so that her legs went around his waist. He still had his jeans and polo shirt on, and the look of Emma straddling his waist with her bare tits out had me fisting my hands over my erection.

“You’re perfect.” Samuel held her up and thrust his covered crotch into her. “I know what I’m doing, and what I can handle. Trust me, I’m going to enjoy every second of this. As long as it’s what you want.”

Her hands were on Samuel’s shoulders, and she gripped the hard ridge of muscle that ran down his neck. Her breathing changed, turning deeper and quieter as she looked from him to me. She nodded, her decision firm. “Yes.”

“Hallelujah.” Samuel set her back on her feet and stripped her shorts in record time.

Emma sat on the bed and pointed at us. “I want both of you naked too.” She held her thighs clenched tight together, and I wondered exactly what was going through her mind.

She’d already removed my shirt, so I hooked my thumbs in my jogging pants and shoved them down, along with my boxers. My erection popped free, and she eyed me with appreciation gleaming in her eyes.

Samuel moved slower but no less certainly as he added his clothes to our pile on the floor. He climbed back onto the bed, kissing Emma as he passed. He stopped in the center and flopped onto his back. “Come on, Em.”

I nodded for her to go ahead and moved into position above Samuel. She swung her leg over Samuel’s face, and I got my first glimpse of her gleaming sex. God she was beautiful.

Samuel gripped her thighs and buried his nose in her clit.

Emma’s mouth opened and she leaned forward, her hips slowly rolling forward over Samuel’s face. I wanted to make this last. There was no way I wasn’t watching her come over and over again before I let go.

“Come here, Alex.” Emma propped her elbows on the bed and motioned me closer. Whatever Samuel was doing to her, she was enjoying every second. Her skin flushed, and every now and then, she’d moan and roll her hips. “I can’t believe I’m this lucky.”

I slid into position. “We’re the lucky ones,” I said an instant before her lips wrapped around the head of my cock. She felt better than I’d imagined when I jacked off in the shower. Her warm mouth swallowed me down and down until she arched her neck and fisted a hand beneath her mouth to give me friction from hilt to tip.

“Good God that feels amazing.” I sank into her pillows and watched her blow me. I’d never seen a more beautiful sight in my life. Her ass pointed at the sky, and I spotted Samuel’s hands holding her open so he could lap at her clit before thrusting his tongue into her. She groaned around my cock, and the vibration in her throat sent an answering pulse along my shaft.

Samuel repeated the action and she popped my cock out of her mouth. Her eyes met mine, and I had the pleasure of watching them widen and her pupils dilate until they took over her irises.

“She’s getting close, Samuel. Whatever you just did, she loved it.”

Emma arched her spine and groaned. “I want you to come too,” she said between stuttered breaths.

“We will,” I reassured her. “But not for a while.” I grinned wickedly. “We have all day, and I for one am not going to let it go to waste.”

Her head dropped and she licked my cock, then teased the tip with her tongue and teeth before sliding me as deep as she could handle. I let her do what she wanted and take what she needed from me. A deep hum started in her throat, and she took me deeper than ever. Her cheeks hollowed out as she sucked and stroked me. Her head pumped up and down, going further down my shaft with each stroke.

I ran my fingers through her hair and gathered it into a knot on the back of her head. I fisted my hand in her hair and took in the glorious sight of her straining over my cock.

She came hard, her entire body tightening. I pulled my cock from her mouth and lifted her head so I could watch the

emotions rampaging across her face.

“Samuel. Oh my God.” She fisted both hands in the sheets and shook as the orgasm rocked through her. When it passed, she rolled off Samuel and lay on her back, gasping for air.

Samuel gave a feral smile and crooked a finger at me. “I want to watch you fuck her, then we’ll take turns.” His face gleamed with her juices, and he didn’t give a fuck. I’d never seen Samuel like this, he looked halfway unhinged and desperate. He cupped her pussy with one hand and stroked her clit with his thumb. “Emma, are you comfortable with anal?”

She put a hand to her chest and patted it a few times. “I’ve done it before. It was okay.”

“Just okay? What kind of flapjack were you sleeping with?” Samuel shook his head and moved to the head of the bed, where he sprawled out and rubbed his cock. “He must have been a real jerkoff.”

“You’ve no idea.” Emma raised her head and looked at each of us. “I’ve never had this much fun during sex.”

Samuel gave me a look that was easy enough to interpret. It told me to make it good for Emma. I’d planned to do that already, but now I was even more determined. I made my way over to Emma and settled between her legs. The head of my cock pressed against her clit, and she rocked over me, offering herself to me.

“We haven’t even begun to have fun.” I eased my cock into her, stopping with the head seating inside. I gripped my dick with one hand and popped in and out of her, giving her a taste of my girth.

Her eyebrows did that pucker thing again, and she gripped my shoulders with both hands.

“More.” She arched her hips, trying to take me deeper. When she met the resistance from my hand, she huffed. But then her clit hit my knuckle and her walls tightened around me. “I’m so sensitive,” she moaned. “Every touch feels like it will send me over the edge.”

“Then fall.” I gave her a little more, making sure my knuckle rubbed her nub again. “Fall again and again. Let us watch you shatter into a million pieces. It’s a beautiful sight, Emma.” I removed my hand and inched my fullness all the way into her tightness. “God you’re tight.” I struggled to hold myself back, but she needed to adjust.

She winced slightly when I moved, the movement telling me she needed more time.

I kissed the valley between her breasts. “Look at Samuel. Look how hot he is for you. He’s horny as shit, but he’s waiting for you to be ready for what he has in mind. We’re going to please you every way we can, Emma.” Her walls fluttered and relaxed, giving me room to stroke her in slow, tiny bursts.

“You’re thick.” Emma’s eyes rolled closed. “I’ve never been this full before.”

“Just wait.” Samuel’s voice was a quiet promise.

I couldn’t take my eyes off Emma. Why did being with her make me feel complete?

EMMA

Was this really happening? Alex's decadently slow strokes drove me wild. The minute I saw his girth, I knew I needed it inside me. I anticipated how good it would feel, but the reality of it was so much better than I imagined.

Samuel's eyes locked on mine. There was a pent-up eagerness barely leashed beneath his quiet exterior. He stroked his cock with a firm hand, and I almost asked Alex to flip us over so I could suck Samuel while Alex fucked me. Samuel's attention on my pussy earlier was amazing, but I still wanted more. When would I be satisfied?

"Harder," I moaned into Alex's ear. My fingers flexed over his spine. I loved every move he made. Loved the way his back moved beneath my hands when he thrust into me. He dragged his cock through my slick folds, pulling out completely.

He gave me a devilish grin. "Think you can handle it?"

I wrapped one leg around his hip and opened my hips wider. "I need it, Alex. I need all of you. Make me come."

"As you wish." He tunneled into me in a powerful thrust that fully seated his cock.

"Yes. Like that." I dragged my ankle over his ass and pressed him harder into my cunt. "Shove that big dick in as hard as you can."

He repeated the motion, giving me the entire length of his cock with each hard stroke. I'd been riding the edge of an orgasm since he first put his dick inside. I wanted the full release with a desperation that had me saying things I'd never say outside the bedroom. Hell, I'd never said them *inside* the bedroom until I met my firemen.

"I like when you talk dirty." Alex licked the side of my neck, then bit my earlobe. His breath rushed into my ear, and the delightful tingle that preceded an orgasm started at the base of my neck. It crawled along my scalp in a wave connected to my pussy.

"That's it." Samuel drawled out from the head of the bed. "Get her ready, Alex. She's going to need to be fully aroused before I take her ass."

I convulsed around Alex as the phantom feel of Samuel's dick sliding in my tight back hole caused my breath to catch.

"Fuck." Alex choked and his face contorted. "She's down for that, Samuel. She nearly locked me in place she tightened so hard. I can barely move."

He'd better move. "I need to come. Oh God, Alex. Don't stop." I mewled and pleaded while opening myself wider to him.

He took the opportunity to lift onto one arm and pull my leg over his shoulder. The change in angle, coupled with his deeper thrusts, caused a bomb of pleasure to go off inside me. I screamed and reached out, finding Samuel's dick with one hand. I tugged it in time with his own hand, in time with the waves of pleasure running through me.

Alex continued stroking me, his girth pushing me to my limit and then beyond. Another, smaller orgasm rolled through me. Alex flipped me over, and Samuel's dick was right there, ready and waiting for me. I buried him deep in my mouth and rocked my hips against Alex, seeking another orgasm before the final waves had drifted away. They made it easy to forget my inhibitions. All I cared about was giving and receiving pleasure. They'd made me feel like a queen, and I wanted to return the favor.

Alex knotted his hand in my hair and used his body to drive me over Samuel's cock. He rode me, the hand in my hair guiding me. Samuel watched me through hooded eyes, his jaw locked in what looked like an attempt to hold himself back.

I raised my head. "Don't you want to come?"

"I'm waiting," he answered simply. "I want your ass, Emma. I've never wanted anyone the way I want you. And it's going to be magnificent. So I'll let you suck and play, and I'll even make you come with my dick in your pussy, but I won't let go until I'm balls deep in your ass."

All those words coming out of his mouth caused mine to fall open. He nudged my lower lip with the tip of his cock, and I let Alex push me down over the bulbous head and then further. I was amazed at the differences between them. Samuel's cock was long and wide, though not as thick as Alex. He had them all beat when it came to girth, and Henry won on length. Not that I was judging them because they all, for fuck sure, knew how to use them. I hadn't had Samuel yet, but I knew from the way he ate me out that he knew how to please me. I'd never go without an orgasm again.

Alex kneaded my hip with his free hand, then bowed around me and fingered my clit while his hips pistoned his cock so fast that all I could do was go along for the ride. I took Samuel deep in my mouth, and when the orgasm rushed up and I screamed, I took him further. He pumped down my throat several quick jerks before he pulled out and let me catch my breath.

I rode the wave of bliss for several seconds. But then Alex slid out of me and patted my ass. "Go ride Samuel until you come again, then you might be ready for us to all finish."

I didn't think I could handle another round, but the promise at the end of this sexual exploration drove me up into Samuel's lap. I straddled his waist like I'd straddled his face. He held his cock up for me and I lowered onto him in slow motion. His eyes fluttered and he groaned. "This is going to be harder than I thought." He bucked his hips, then gathered my tits between his massive hands and brought his mouth down to

tease a nipple. He worked one, then the other. My body was so sensitive that I almost couldn't stand the pressure of his hair on my clit. Almost.

I tipped my body back to ease the tickling sensation and used my thighs to raise and lower my body. "I want to hear you come." I held Samuel's arms and bounced on his dick. "It's been a while since anyone gave me anal. It's going to be so tight, Samuel. And with Alex in my pussy, the pleasure is going to be so good." My breaths turned ragged as another orgasm approached.

"God bless women's ability to have multiple orgasms." Alex groaned from where he lay on his back beside me. His chest rose and fell as he worked to catch his breath. "I love watching you come. It's my new favorite thing." He rose to his knees and pulled my hair over my shoulders, then kissed my neck. "Keep trying to break him, and he'll figure out a way to pay you back. Maybe he'll keep you in bed all day, fucking you until you can't walk. Then I'll take a turn. I'll run you a warm bath, then fuck you in the tub."

Samuel drew my nipple into his mouth and sucked hard. He plucked the other, rolling the nipple between his thumb and forefinger. The sudden pinch of pain was the last thing I needed to drive me into another orgasm. I collapsed onto his dick and undulated my hips to keep the pleasure going as long as possible.

"That's it." Samuel feathered kisses over my chin and jaw. "Now you're ready." He lifted me off his erection. "Look how ready you are, Emma. You drenched me so good I won't need any lube."

I looked down at his cock covered in my juices and grinned sloppily. I felt drunk on the waves of euphoria. "Take my ass, Samuel. I want you both inside me so I can come again. The more you give me, the more I want. I might never leave this bed again. It feels so good." I was strung out on sex, and I didn't care what came out of my mouth. As long as they kept making me come.

“Turn around.” Samuel’s hands dropped to my hips, and he guided me so that my back was to him and my front to Alex. He pushed up onto his knees and bent me at the waist. His other hand slid between my ass cheeks. He spread my juices over my back hole and pressed his first finger in. “You’re right, sweetheart. This is going to be tight. But you can take it. I know you can.” He replaced his finger with the head of his cock. The tip pressed hard into my ass, and I bit my lip at the strange sensation. He worked his way into me slowly, stopping several times to let me adjust. The sensation of fullness made my tongue feel thick in my mouth, and I barely breathed until he reached around my hip and used his thumb to circle my clit.

“We’re almost there.” His voice sounded strained, and I looked over my shoulder to see veins standing out on his neck and arms. He showed an enormous amount of restraint. “You’re doing great. Just a little more.”

Alex moved beside me and rubbed his hands up my back and around my ribs. He teased my nipples as Samuel finger fucked my clit. “I’m so full.” I lowered my head to the bed, offering him all of my ass. “Damn, it feels so good. Don’t stop. Please don’t stop.”

“I’m not going to stop.” He eased forward again and let out a breath. “I’m in. Give yourself a second, then straighten while Alex gets into place.”

I wiggled my hips to get a better feel of him.

“Fuck me. Be careful doing that. I’m barely holding on, Emma. I want to make this good for you, but you’re so damned tight. It’s all I can do to wait.” Samuel palmed my hips and gave a tiny thrust.

“Holy shit.” I straightened too fast and had to stop to catch myself.

Alex walked toward me on his knees.

I arched back into Samuel and wrapped my arms around his neck. He kept circling my clit with his thumb until Alex threaded his cock into my pussy, then he moved to my breasts.

The fullness I'd felt before was nothing to this. Every time I breathed, I felt them shifting inside me. Alex withdrew, then pushed deeper.

"I felt that." Samuel panted into my ear. "I feel Alex in your amazing cunt. I feel every move he makes, and I feel you tightening around him. It makes your ass tighter too. You feel so good." He pumped in and out in short bursts, his dick hitting that muscle deep inside that made me gasp.

"I need you to come now." I kept one arm hooked around Samuel's neck and put the other around Alex's. The three of us were so close together, I felt every breath they took. The slightest move drove me closer to the last and final climax for the day. I felt it start and the raw power of it swept through my entire body in a tidal wave. I moved my hips, pulling away from Samuel and taking Alex deeper, then repeated the motion. They braced and helped me keep up the rhythm.

"I've never felt anything like this." Alex pressed his forehead to mine. "This has to be the best sex I've ever had."

"Me too." Samuel's cock pushed in hard and fast. "I may never be the same after this."

Their words and actions combined, hitting all my emotional needs as well as physical. This time, when the orgasm came, I screamed out for both of them. I'd never felt anything this powerful in my entire life. It was like every nerve came alive at the exact same time and sent waves of the orgasm into every muscle and bone. Samuel came a second after me, his own release filling me with an impossible tightness as he bellowed and shot his cum in my ass.

Alex lasted another five seconds before he lost control. His eyes closed and he gripped my shoulders while he bowed backward and thrust one last time into my seizing pussy. Every pulse of his cum sent a new rush of feeling through me.

We collapsed into a heap. I struggled to catch my breath and burst out laughing.

Samuel pulled my hair back from my face and kissed my temple. "What's so funny?"

“This has to be the best Christmas ever. I got my present two weeks early.” I turned my head to capture his lips. And maybe I’d get plenty more before it was all over.

Alex cursed and withdrew from me. He shook his head and held up a hand when Samuel tried to speak.

“Alex, what’s wrong?” I asked.

He rolled off the bed and grabbed his clothes, not bothering to put them on before he stalked from my room.

My door slammed shut without an answer.

The sudden silence and the tension radiating off Samuel almost made me afraid to look at him.

“What was that all about?” My chin quivered at Alex’s reaction.

Samuel caressed my shoulders and pulled his cock out of my ass while kissing my shoulder. “It’s not you, Emma. Alex is suffering from a bad breakup. I guess he’s not as over it as I thought.”

“Oh.” Well, shit. That didn’t make me feel any better. If anything, I felt worse. We’d just had the most wonderful sex of our lives. I’d hoped he would stick around. Maybe become friends? Was that too much to ask of the guys I was sleeping with?

Another, more agonizing thought rushed in. Did Alex have sex with me out of desperation? Was I breakup sex? I didn’t like the idea of being Alex’s rebound girl.

HENRY

I was supposed to be enjoying dinner with my crew, yet I couldn't stop thinking about Emma. Not just her, but that she'd had sex with Samuel and Alex... at the same time. The thoughts that conjured kept me locked in my office most of the day after she left.

Samuel slid the pot of spaghetti over to me with a meaningful look. "You need to eat, Captain."

Alex and Derek were already shoveling mouthfuls in. We all ate like we were starving most times because it never seemed to fail that the minute we sat down to eat, we got called out to a fire.

The large kitchen was situated so we could see the truck and anyone who might walk into the bay. Derek and Alex sat side by side across from me. Their voices were low and their expressions tight. Was Alex telling Derek about his day with Emma? The thought didn't make me jealous. Well, yes, it did, actually. I wanted to be there with Emma. Even if it meant sharing her with Derek, Alex, and Samuel. We lived together during our shifts at the station. We ate together. Hell, we'd talked about renting a house together because why the hell not. In this economy, it made sense and we all got along.

I watched Alex while taking a careful bite. My stomach continued to twist with images of Emma in bed with not just Alex and Samuel but me as well. It was an intoxicating idea. The thought of a deeper sexual relationship with Emma pulsed

through me. She'd responded well to our first session. Was it possible she would take more?

Thank fuck Emma didn't work our same twenty-four-hour shifts. She'd gone home a few hours ago, leaving the atmosphere in the station tense and uncertain.

"Hey, Alex, you catch the game last night?" Derek asked while wiping up the last of his sauce with a slice of garlic bread.

Alex glanced quickly at Samuel, then shook his head. "No. What did I miss?"

The bells rang before Derek could answer. We all threw our napkins on the table and bolted out to the truck. We had our routine down to a science. We stepped into our gear and hopped onto the truck within minutes.

"Wells, take the wheel." I jammed my helmet on and grabbed hold of a bar as Wells peeled out of the bay and screamed down the street. My heart kicked into overdrive. Man, nothing felt like this. The thrill of racing toward danger, the knowledge that we were the line between salvation and devastation, it never failed to give me a punch of adrenaline.

We all jumped from the truck as soon as Wells slowed enough for us to land safely. "Derek, you and Alex get a line on the house. Samuel, start on the hose. Wells, get that hydrant for Samuel."

They all scrambled to their jobs. Derek and Alex rushed toward the squat brick home while I gave it a quick assessment. Houses like these, with old wood in the walls and dried out roofs, were the most common this time of year. People let their Christmas trees dry out and they catch fire, or an old heater gets plugged into a bad outlet. There were a hundred things that could spark a fire like this, and in a home this size, it was almost a guaranteed total loss.

That didn't mean we wouldn't try.

Anyone in the home?" I trotted over to the police already pushing back curious onlookers.

The lieutenant in charge shook his head. “Homeowner says it’s just her and her daughter. But her daughter was visiting a neighbor. So was she. She’s not sure what happened or how the fire started.”

“Great. Thanks.” I nodded and rushed back toward my team. “Alex, you and Derek hit the roof. Samuel, you and Wells see if you can keep it contained.”

Alex’s head jerked up and he yanked his helmet off. “I hear someone.”

“Homeowner says no one is inside.” I tapped my helmet. “Get your helmet back on.”

He ignored me and ran toward the house. He jammed the helmet into place and raised both arms over his head while leaping through the open doorway.

“Alex!” Samuel shoved the hose at Wells. “Keep going.”

Derek tore off after Alex, leaving the hose.

“Shit.” I cursed and followed as another fire truck arrived. I recognized the captain and gave him a hurried explanation as I ran past.

“We’ll cover you.” He turned and started bellowing orders to his team.

I lost sight of him while plunging into the house’s smoky depths. All I cared about was getting my people out safe. Fuck Alex for breaking protocol and my orders. What the fuck was he thinking? I expected this from Derek, but I’d never expected Alex to turn into the reckless one. Maybe that breakup had been harder on him than I realized. Was this what Samuel meant when he said he was worried about the kid?

Did this have anything to do with Emma?

Acrid smoke filled the house, making it almost impossible to see. “Alex? Derek?” I kept bellowing their names as I moved from room to room.

Samuel appeared at my left side. “Any sign of them?”

“Nothing. One of you better fucking answer me.” They should’ve been able to hear me through the helmet’s comm system. I poked the floor with my fire ax, checking the stability before taking a step. Samuel did the same beside me. We move quickly but cautiously. If one of us fell through the floor, then we’d really be up shit creek.

“Kitchen.” Derek’s voice came through, raspy and thick. “Alex hears someone crying.”

“Do you?” I had to ask. With the way Alex had been behaving, I needed to confirm if he was cracking or if this was a legit call.

“I-I’m not sure.” Derek sounded reluctant. Which meant Alex might be experiencing phantom cries. It happened sometimes. Mostly to guys who’d been in a few too many fires, firefighters who’d lost someone in a blaze. They heard those cries and followed them regardless of everyone telling them it was all in their head.

“Fuck all of you. There’s someone here.” Alex was breathless and agitated through the comms, but I recognized his deep passion for making certain no one got left inside. The last thing any of us needed on our conscience was finding out the woman was wrong about her daughter.

I motioned Samuel to move ahead of me. “We’re coming your way. Heads down. Watch out for each other.”

Beams groaned and popped overhead. The fire crawled up the walls all around us, but the main source of smoke seemed to be coming from the kitchen. Where my men might be hunting a phantom cry.

“You can go back, Captain. I got this. No one needs to get hurt if I’m wrong.” The determination in his voice fueled us all, and he received a round of *fuck you’s* from the entire group.

Ducking into the kitchen beneath a flaming crossbeam, I spotted their yellow suits a foot in front of me. “We’re right behind you. And you have five seconds to prove someone’s

here before I toss you over my shoulder and drag you out myself.”

He knew I'd do it.

“Listen.” He dropped to a knee and strained forward. “There it is again.”

I listened with all my might. Just when I was about to give up and haul Alex out by the back of his coat, I heard it. A gentle sob.

“Is anyone here?” Alex crawled forward a few steps. “I’m with the fire department. I’m here to get you out. Can you tell me where you are?”

“Here,” a tiny voice squeaked. “Under the table.”

Well fuck me and call me an asshole. The kid was right. Regret and relief mingled together in a toxic brew that rolled acid up the back of my throat. “Alright, Alex. Get the girl and let’s get out of here.”

The place wouldn’t last much longer. Ash fell from the roof, landing on Derek’s helmet and covering his suit in a fine layer of gray.

“Captain, you need to get out of there.” The strange voice broke into our channel with a sense of urgency. “Roof is starting to sag on the north corner. The whole thing’s going to come down.”

“Hear that, Alex? Get your ass in gear.” I edged off to the side. “Everyone search, keep low. The table can’t be that hard to find.”

The ceiling groaned again and the structure began to buckle.

“Got her.” Alex let out a breathless whoop. “Let’s get out of here.”

He ran past me with a bundle cradled in his arms. Samuel charged ahead, keeping the way clear. A crash sounded behind me. I didn’t bother looking, but the sudden whoosh of flames and water raining in told me the roof was giving in. And we

were in the northern part of the house. No exit except the one we'd come in through.

I gripped the back of Derek's coat and propelled him forward as debris fell on every side. They were getting out. I'd make sure of it.

We burst out of the house and into the yard, each of us gasping for air. Alex never stopped, never even slowed. He carried the girl not only out of danger but toward the woman who'd miss her most.

The house collapsed in a heap of fire and fury. Sparks danced through the air and drifted in the cold breeze that stirred the bare trees all around us and between the neighboring houses. I turned once to look before focusing on my team. We'd barely made it out. A few more seconds and we'd all be extinct. No more Emma. The thought lodged like a boulder in my throat. For the first time in my career, I wondered if it was time to quit. Fear gripped me by the balls and strangled my breath.

The woman who'd been pointed out as the homeowner gasped and covered her mouth with her hands. "Ellie? Oh my God. What were you doing in there?" She faced the police officer. "She wasn't supposed to be in there. She was visiting her friend next door."

Alex deposited the girl on a gurney at the nearest ambulance, where a female EMT got to work listening to the girl's lungs and slipping an oxygen mask into place.

The girl—Ellie—coughed and wiped her face with her sleeves. "I came home early. I wanted to surprise you with hot chocolate, but when I turned on the stove, it started burning."

Mother and daughter threw their arms around each other and sobbed. The sight of it unraveled the tight knot of anger but didn't dispel it altogether.

"Thank you." The mom hugged Alex, then each of us, though we'd done nothing but try and get Alex to leave.

Alex patted the distraught woman's back, then turned away. He headed back to the hose he'd abandoned and got to

work adding the stream of water to the others. The house was a lost cause, but that didn't stop us from doing all we could, including keeping it contained to this one lot.

Houses on either side were in danger. The slightest missed spark could light this whole neighborhood up if we didn't do our jobs.

I followed Alex and grabbed him by the collar, dragging him away from the scene where we wouldn't be spotted. "What the fuck do you think you were doing? What gives you the right to break protocol?"

"I heard someone, Cap." Alex was relentless when he wanted to be, and right now, he felt justified.

"Do you need a suspension so you can get your head on straight?" I couldn't really blame the kid, and I felt like the world's biggest asshole for harassing him about it. But protocols were in place for a reason. They're my brothers, every damned one of them. I'd die for any man on my team in a heartbeat. That didn't mean I wanted them to give up their lives so carelessly. Not carelessly. I made myself look at the girl and her mother. If Alex hadn't heard her, we'd all have heard about her death tomorrow.

None of us could stomach the idea of losing someone.

"I had to save her." Alex leaned in close and stared me down. "It was my job to save her."

"That's no reason to charge into a burning house without backup. All you had to do was wait. What were you thinking? Or were you thinking at all?"

Something passed over Alex's face, but for the first time in my career, I couldn't understand the look. He was convinced that he'd needed to run in the house. I understood that kind of passion, but tolerating it was unacceptable.

"I'm thinking clearly for the first time in months." The kid never wavered from his conviction.

I appreciated that about him most of the time. It might take him forever to come to a conclusion, but once he did, he never backed down. So what changed for him today? What made

him reckless enough to leave us all behind while he ran inside? “Did you need to be the one in the spotlight? Was it your turn to be the hero?” I didn’t understand what he meant.

Alex stayed silent but looked over his shoulder at the crumpled house.

“Cap, we got another one.” Wells’s voice cut through my comm. “Other team says they got this one covered if we want to roll out.”

I pointed a finger at Alex. “We’re not done talking about this.”

EMMA

I can't believe I haven't had sex in a week. It's not like that's an unusual thing, but I thought things would change now that I'd gotten the firefighters' attention. Maybe I never really had it at all. Annoyance banded around my chest in a vise, and I could barely breathe through the surge that drove my steps faster.

"I won't be late." I checked my watch again and increased my pace. I'd stuck around the apartment too long this morning waiting on Derek or Alex to mention something.

"Hey, where's the fire?" Derek trotted up to my side and slowed to keep pace with me.

I rolled my eyes and tried not to melt at the look in his eyes. "You should know, you're the one always running into burning buildings."

"Not always." He shoved his hood back and raked a hand over his head. Snowflakes dotted his hair within seconds, but he ignored them to focus on me. "Alex is still smarting over Cap's ass chewing last week."

They'd told me all about that; how Alex ran into a burning house to save a little girl. Derek also told me that for a minute, he'd worried that Alex was going crazy. But then everything worked out.

I didn't tell him that I'd seen the footage on the news. How the building had collapsed seconds after they emerged. I watched that story with my heart in my throat. I'd never tell them to leave the job they all loved, but seeing that news

report hammered home the fact that I could lose any one of them at any time. They saved people, and they saved homes and buildings whenever they could. They didn't exactly consider their lives expendable, but the risk was worth the reward.

That didn't mean I'd ever stop worrying.

Derek yawned and pawed a hand over his face. "Man, this twenty-four-hour shift shit is getting to me. I feel like I haven't had a good night's sleep all week."

Neither had I, but for an entirely different reason. Derek's normally bright and eager expression was subdued today. All of them were looking a little worse for the wear these days. When they were at the station, they barely had a minute to sit down before they were out on a call for one thing or another. I'd spent half the day by myself in Henry's office while they helped another station with a big structure fire.

"Things will slow down soon, right?" I asked Derek.

He shrugged. "Hard to say. Alex says Christmas is the busiest time around here. And Henry says we're never, ever to say it's a slow day. It's like a jinx or something."

I laughed, finally feeling like we might be getting back to normal. "It was the same way at the doctor's office. If anyone ever mentioned a slow day, you could bet we'd end up with a dozen emergencies within an hour."

The station building came into view, and I took a second to appreciate the bright red building with a backdrop of snowy gray clouds piled up behind it. We were bound to get a few more inches through the next few days. All the shops I'd passed on my walk over had their windows decorated. "Are you getting a Christmas tree?"

"I haven't thought about it. We have one at the station for the angel tree. Always thought that was enough. No sense in it at the apartment when we're never there to celebrate."

"Oh." I should've seen that answer coming, but it hit like a punch in the gut. Of course they were never home at Christmas. "You all must go visit your families."

Derek stepped in front of me, cutting me off. “What’s wrong? You sound sad.”

“Nothing.” I brushed my hand through the air, batting away snowflakes. “It’s this time of year, it always makes me weepy.”

He narrowed his eyes at me like he didn’t believe me, but he moved back to my side and we resumed our walk. “None of us have family to visit. We all end up at the station on Christmas morning. We always volunteer to deliver the angel tree presents since all the other teams *do* have families to spend the day with.”

So, they all spent the day together, kind of like their own version of a family. I’d noticed how close they all were the longer we all worked together.

“Hey, Samuel.” Derek waved at the older firefighter arriving ahead of them. He gave me a pat on the shoulder before he took off at a jog to meet up with Samuel, who lifted his coffee cup in my direction as a kind of *good morning* salute.

I shouldn’t feel like they were rejecting me. They’ve been working hard, their crazy hours keeping them out all night sometimes. But it felt like they’d gotten what they wanted from me and were tossing me aside.

What happened to all that talk about sharing me, or me being able to go to any of them for sex? Not that I’d done that. I wasn’t about to go crawl in Derek’s bed when I saw how exhausted he was. He barely ate before falling into bed. I shouldn’t care. I told myself that I didn’t care. I’d known going into this situation that it was a passing thing.

Shit, I even *told* Alex and Samuel that it was temporary. “You knew better.” I huffed at my own infatuation. “What guy in their right mind would want me when they could have any woman they wanted? And here I’d thought I could satisfy four men?” I clamped my lips shut and walked into the fire station.

Henry’s door stood open, and I walked straight in, bypassing the man himself to sit at my desk and put myself to

work. I couldn't bring myself to look at him. It hurt too much to see him there and know that he didn't want me anymore.

"Emma." Henry tapped the edge of my desk with two fingers. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing." I unraveled my scarf and hung it up with my coat on the hook Henry had installed behind my desk. The sight of it brought back memories of us in here together, his cock filling me up. I wanted that again with a desperation that shamed me. Every breath brought Henry closer to me. I focused on the paperwork and avoided Henry's probing stare.

The last time I felt this tense was right before Henry fucked me. I licked my dry lips and turned my back on him.

An annoyed huff sounded, but Henry walked back to his desk and sat.

"Do you have those reports from the last meeting?" I forced my voice to remain calm but still couldn't gather the courage to actually look at Henry.

"They're on the shelf." All of a sudden, Henry reached past me and grabbed a binder from the bookshelf. His scent flooded my system and all I could think about was last week and his hands on my body. "Here."

I gave myself clear instructions to smile, but I was sure it looked more like a grimace. "Thanks. You can put it right there."

I wasn't about to reach out and take it from him. I couldn't trust myself to touch him and not fall apart.

"Emma." His breath fanned my cheek. "Look at me." While the words were a direct order, they didn't have the sharp command that I'd heard from him out in the field.

"No." If I looked, then I'd want him. And if I wanted him even a little more, I'd burst into flames. Flames that he'd feel forced to put out. That was not the kind of woman I wanted to be. I was not a charity case. Boots clattered over the concrete floor, and I heard Samuel and Derek joking amid the sounds of weights being moved around in the weight room.

A walkie-talkie crackled. I'd come to appreciate these sounds. They were a constant reminder of the world he belonged to—a world of danger, heroism, and camaraderie. The fire of want flamed hotter.

Time slowed the longer he stood there. Never backing down.

The fire station's stark fluorescent lights cast elongated shadows across the floor. I felt Henry's gaze taking me in and refusing to waver.

Someone dropped a wrench outside and it skipped across the floor, sliding beneath the fire truck. Alex stooped and grabbed it, then passed it back. Their muted conversation gave me something else to think about besides Henry.

My mind raced, torn between desire and self-preservation. "Don't you have work to do?" My voice came out tight and controlled.

His fingers brushed against my cheek, the touch infinitely gentle. "What's wrong?"

It almost broke me, the way he spoke like he actually cared. My breath hitched as I closed my eyes. I wouldn't be able to resist him much longer.

The chaos of the fire station faded into the background the longer I sat there trying to avoid Henry.

"Tell me what's wrong," he whispered.

His words sent a shiver down my spine, and I finally turned to look into his eyes. What I saw there weakened my knees. Anger was the only thing that would help me here. I had to get him to back off.

"Leave me alone, Henry." I pushed to my feet and shoved past him. "It's none of your business."

I lied through my teeth, but I had to if I wanted to keep my sanity. What was going on in my own mind was my business.

"And if I say no?" Henry cut me off before I could bolt from his office. "Whatever it is, you can tell me."

“What part of none of your business don’t you understand?” I jammed a finger in his chest. “Get out of my way. You can’t forcibly hold me in your office until I talk.”

“I can.” He wrapped his fingers around my wrist, and I’ll be damned if a shudder of want didn’t rattle up my spine. “You liked being tied up in here last time.”

Fuck. My pulse skipped beneath his fingertips. I knew he’d felt it when his eyebrows rose and he hummed low in the back of his throat.

“What happens in my personal life is none of your business.” I tugged on my hand, and he released it. I wanted to be glad, but part of me was upset that he gave in so easily. That he let me go without a fight.

That wasn’t how any of this was supposed to go.

“Do you want to change that?” Henry stroked a finger down my cheek and tucked his finger beneath my chin, asking me to raise my face and look at him.

I resisted as long as I could, but curiosity got the better of me and I met his gaze. His eyes were gentle and kind, even as something sparked deep in them.

“We’re about to have our next forty-eight hours off. I have an idea... if you’re interested.” His voice dipped to a dark whisper. “There’s something I’d like to try.”

“What do you mean?” Dryness invaded my throat and I licked my lips again. At this rate, I’d eat all my lipstick by breakfast. “I thought you were done with me.” I hadn’t meant to say that. I never wanted to reveal my weakness, my insecurities, to him. To any of them for that matter. I’d done it before when I let Derek know I’d never had proper oral sex. Then again with Samuel and Alex.

“What?” He reared back like I’d slapped him. Keeping his eyes on mine, he reached back and closed the door, cutting off the sounds from the station outside. I caught a glimpse of Samuel’s face before the door shut him out. He’d looked intrigued. “Why would you think that?”

“Because.” I couldn’t say it. I couldn’t admit that I felt fragile and needy, and I wanted him to say that he’d never get tired of me. That would never happen.

I became Henry’s sole focus. He worked his hands up from my shoulders and over my neck. His thumbs brushed my jawline and his entire demeanor became one that I’d only seen him use when with his team. “Sometimes we get a little wrapped up in work, but that never means we don’t still want you.”

We? Oh God, he said we. He was talking for all of them and not just himself. “That’s why I wanted to ask you about tomorrow. I want to show you what I mean.”

“What did you have in mind?” I felt myself melting toward him and my palms grazed his sides, where I gripped his shirt with both hands to keep from falling. My mind whirled with possibilities.”

“You’ve seen a little of what I like.” His chin jerked toward his desk. “But that’s not even close to the true darkness. If you’re interested, I’d like to show you what I’m capable of.”

Did I? Would that help in the long run or only make things worse when I had to give them up? Damn my curiosity. I’d had a taste of Henry, and I was desperate for more. “Show me.”

“Not here.” He let go of me with one hand and reached back toward his desk. Holding up a slip of paper, he pressed it into my palm. “This is my address. You can meet me there.”

His address. I was going to see Henry’s house and experience the full depth of his darker sexual tendencies. Holy fuck. I fingered the paper and remembered the look on Samuel’s face as the door closed. “Will it be just the two of us? Or will the others join us?”

I waited for his answer with a breathlessness that made black spots dance in my vision.

DEREK

Coming to Henry's house always made me nervous. Not this time. This time, I leaped up the steps and rapped my knuckles on the wooden frame without thinking twice. Soft lights gleamed over the porch, highlighting a trio of Christmas wreaths hanging in the windows. Huh. Henry decorated for Christmas. That was a shock. I couldn't remember ever seeing this place lit up with Christmas lights or any kind of decoration. Henry was fastidious and kept a perfect house, but it was also open and inviting with lots of color and personality. And a massive, big-screen TV.

Samuel and Alex pulled their vehicles in behind mine and hopped out.

"You're early." Samuel slapped me on the back and pounded his fist on the door. "Open up, Henry. It's cold out here."

I rolled my eyes. Samuel was never cold. The man practically burned up year around, going without a coat half the winter.

Alex stood back and let the two of us vie for beating down Henry's door when he didn't answer soon enough to suit us.

"What's the deal?" I shot the question over my shoulder at Alex. "He never takes this long to answer the door. It's just our regular get-together." We hung out and talked shit sometimes. "Henry?" I pummeled the door again.

It opened enough for Emma to poke her head out. "Wow, you guys actually knocked." She popped a hand on her hip and

pushed the door open all the way. “I figured you’d just barge in like you do the office.”

“Nah. We respect Henry’s privacy.” Samuel leaned down and touched Emma under the chin. “Most of the time.”

“What are you doing here?” Alex was the only one not thrilled with Emma’s appearance.

I was happy as fuck to see her standing there. I grabbed Alex by the shoulder and dragged him inside. “Does it matter why she’s here?”

It didn’t matter to me. To be here and see her again, in a situation where I didn’t have to guard every move, it was like heaven came down to visit me for a day. Samuel led the way to Henry’s kitchen, where he stood at the empty table. Good thing I’d eaten before coming over. Henry had at least warned us that there wouldn’t be food tonight. But he didn’t have the game on or any of the poker stuff out. So, what the hell were we doing here?

Emma walked in behind us and eased around so she stood within sight. White teeth nibbled her lower lip as she darted a look at Henry. Her cheeks colored and she looked away.

“What’s going on?” Samuel broke the tense quiet.

Henry held out his hand toward Emma, and there was something intimate in the gesture. “Emma has a request.”

Emma’s color peaked to an all-time high, and the way she walked to Henry and slipped her hand into his caused my pulse to race. There was only one reason Emma and Henry were here, looking at each other like that. I lost sight of everything else in the room.

“We’re listening.” Tendons popped in Samuel’s arms. He gripped the back of a chair and leaned forward, eyeing Emma and then Henry.

Even Alex straightened and lost some of his animosity. He hadn’t spoken to me much since the fire, or even before the fire. I knew from Samuel that he and Alex had sex with Emma. Alex had been out of sorts since then.

Henry took his time. The bastard was enjoying this way too much. “Emma wants to have sex with all of us. All at the same time. If all of you are willing.”

Well, hell. Way to put us on the spot. My answer came easily enough. “I’m in.” I folded my arms over my chest and looked from Samuel to Alex. “If they bail, is the option still open for me?”

“I’m in.” Samuel punched me in the arm hard enough to sting.

I ignored the flush of pain and waited for Alex. We all waited for Alex. It mattered if he agreed to join us. But even if he backed out, I prayed to God that the rest of us would still get a chance to have the night of our lives. My dick throbbed and swelled.

“What about you, Alex?” Henry didn’t try to pressure Alex, but the question was weighted with the possibility of loving Emma, and he knew it.

Alex held up a hand. “I need to think.” He met Emma’s eyes and seemed to see the same flash of hurt that I caught. “I’m into the idea, I just need a minute to think.”

“Take all the time you need.” Emma released Henry’s hand and moved to stand in front of Alex. She started to reach out but stopped. “I don’t want you to feel pressured into anything. Any of you. I know this is a lot to ask.”

“It’s a bit unorthodox,” Samuel added.

“And most of society would frown on this whole situation.” Emma jerked her head in a nod. “I know. Again, you’re not obligated to say yes.”

“I meant my yes.” I nudged Samuel, who agreed by rubbing his palms together.

Emma held up both hands in a wait motion. “You all need to fully understand the situation.”

“We get it, Em,” Samuel said.

“No. You don’t.” She took a breath that lifted her tits and made me that much hotter for her. “I don’t want Henry to hold

back this time. That means you have to be comfortable with what's going to happen.”

We all turned to look at Henry, who, for the first time since I'd met him, looked slightly uncomfortable. “You all know that I like rough sex. Bondage. BDSM. Nothing that involves blood or intense pain. But it can get dark. If anyone wants out at any point, there's no shame in walking away. I want to give Emma everything she's asked for.”

“Can you handle it?” Alex looked hard at Emma, his mouth wrenched in a frown.

The hints of uncertainty that I'd noticed evaporated. She gave a firm nod and took Henry's hand again. “I'm sure. I have a safe word I can use if things get to be too much. And I second Henry. There's nothing wrong with needing to leave if this is not what you want.”

“I'm still in.” I took my time looking around the room. “I trust all of you. Henry has been there during every dangerous situation in my life. He's always kept me safe. I trust him with this too.”

“Okay.” Alex took a step toward Emma and brushed her hair over her shoulder. “I'm in.”

“Halle-fucking-lujah.” Samuel punched his fist into his open palm. “Let's go.”

“Alright. Follow me.” Henry took the lead, guiding us deeper into the house.

I'd never been any further than the bathroom on the first floor, but he took us up to the second floor and into a room at the end of the hall. My brain caught up a split second before my mouth, which kept me from blurting out a *what the fuck?* at the wrong time.

Henry's bedroom was the sexiest thing I'd ever seen. Black satin sheets covered the bed, and a tangle of straps hung from one wall. Things I'd only ever heard about lined a mahogany dresser.

“Fuck.” Samuel strolled over to the dresser and then looked back at Henry. “This is going to be amazing.”

“Where do we start?” Alex still seemed slightly unsure, but he looked to Henry for instruction.

“Samuel, take Emma’s shirt off. Alex, I want you to get behind her. Take your time playing with her body. This is going to be a long night, and Emma needs to be completely relaxed for all the things I have planned for her.” Henry never wavered in his tone as he backed toward the wall and into a bit of shadow. “Derek, I want you to strip and then sit in the chair at the foot of the bed.”

I followed Henry’s directions. It felt a bit strange for a few seconds. I’d never had anyone tell me what to do during sex unless they were my partner. But I realized I’d been listening to—and obeying—Henry’s orders for a long time. This wasn’t really any different. I kept my attention on Emma as I yanked off my shirt and pants, then jerked down my underwear. My cock sprang free, already thick and hard.

Samuel unbuttoned Emma’s pink shirt one button at a time. He kissed every inch of skin he exposed.

Emma arched her head back, giving him better access. Her head fell onto Alex’s shoulder. He gave her a look of pure adoration and slid his hands over her hips until he dipped beneath her skirt.

Good God. Watching them adore Emma was hot as fuck. I stroked my cock and slumped lower in the chair to get a better hold on my shaft. Samuel freed Emma’s breasts, and Alex reached around to fondle them.

“Get on your knees, Samuel. Take off Emma’s skirt and make her come on your face.” Henry spoke again, and there was a hint of dark control in the tone.

“With pleasure.” Samuel hooked his thumbs in Emma’s skirt and pulled it down as he dropped to his knees. “Spread your legs, darling.” His hands roamed from her calves, up her thighs, and over her mound. “Let me in.”

“Do as he says, Emma. Put your leg over his shoulder. Let Alex help hold you up,” Henry said.

I needed inside that sweet pussy, but I had to wait my turn. We'd all get our chance to please Emma. I knew Henry well enough to understand that no one would be left out tonight, but the main goal was Emma's pleasure.

Emma's leg draped over Samuel's shoulder, and he dove into her pussy like a starving man. I remembered the exquisite taste of her and almost leaped up to shove Samuel out of the way. Alex kneaded her breasts and pinched her nipples while kissing her neck.

Emma gasped and clung to Alex. "Samuel." She moaned his name and lashed her head side to side. "I'm not going to last long."

"Don't hold back." I palmed the precum from my cock and used it as a lubricant as I continued to jack off. "Right, Henry? She gets to come as many times as she wants."

"For now." His enigmatic response intrigued me. What did he have planned for tonight?

Samuel used his thumbs to spread her lips wider. He wrapped his mouth around her clit and sucked.

"Alex, put this inside Emma's pussy." Henry handed Alex a pink dildo. It looked strange in his gnarled hand covered in scars. The soft, delicate material created such a contrast that even Emma noticed. "Emma, this is a remote-controlled dildo. I'm going to play with you while the rest of them play with you."

Alex bent down and inserted the dildo without hesitation. "Fuck her, Henry. I need to hear her come. Please." He wasn't the least bit ashamed of his need.

We all needed to see her fall apart.

Henry moved back into the shadows where I could barely see him. Seconds later, Emma bucked and cursed. Her arms went behind her head and wrapped around Alex's neck.

"That's it, baby girl," he crooned. "Get good and ready for us."

Samuel lapped at her clit, then sucked hard.

I released my cock before I blew my cum. No way I was missing out on the rest of the action. Not that I couldn't please her with more than my dick, but coming inside her was the prize I sought.

"I'm coming. Holy shit. I..." Emma released a guttural scream and ground her hips over Samuel's face. She rode his face through a series of small grunts. When the orgasm eased and she slumped forward, Samuel lowered her leg to the floor and smiled up at her.

"Emma, walk over to Derek and sit in his lap. Keep the dildo in. Derek, you can do anything you want to Emma for the next five minutes, except put your dick in her pussy or her ass," Henry said from his corner.

Emma walked on wobbly legs over to me. She dropped into place, her pussy drenched and dripping over my cock. "What do you want, Derek?"

"Ride me." I grabbed her hips and sucked a nipple into my mouth. I latched on and watched her eyes roll back as vibrations from the dildo pulsed through her. They were so strong that I felt them in my cock, and with her sliding over me, I had to focus to keep from coming. She felt so damned good. How had I ever gotten lucky enough to find a woman like Emma? She loved sex, and I loved giving her sex.

"I'm coming again." Her body spasmed. "I wish you were inside me right now." She arched her back and rubbed her clit over my cock, teasing me with her entrance.

I wished I was inside her right now, but the sweet torture of waiting and knowing she was getting enjoyment out of the moment made it worthwhile. I'd never been a quick lover. I enjoyed languishing in the throes of passion as long as possible. Henry had opened us up to a whole new world of holding back.

I dragged her clit up and down my erection, using the friction to drive her wild while I switched to the other nipple. Wherever the others were, whatever they were doing, I didn't care right now. We'd join back up in a little while, but for this moment, I had Emma all to myself.

Henry increased the vibrations on the dildo. It hummed and pulsed against my cock while Emma threw her head back and howled. “You’re amazing. You’re all fucking amazing. This is going to be the best night of my life. I’m going to fuck you all, and you’re all going to fuck me. Fill me up and make me come until I can’t breathe.” She gasped and shattered in an orgasm so powerful I felt it all the way to my core.

I cradled her in my arms through the waves of pleasure coursing through her body. She melted against me.

“Derek, take Emma to the bed. We’re about to start going a little deeper now.” Henry stepped out of the shadows.

I stood and scooped Emma into my arms, then turned toward the bed. Once I’d settled her in the center, Henry approached carrying a series of leather straps and bondage essentials that I’d seen and heard about but never used.

“Remember the safe word, Emma. Anytime. No shame and no regrets.” Henry’s attention never wavered from Emma as he got to work strapping her wrists and ankles.

HENRY

I needed to hear her say it again before we progressed any further. “Emma, are you sure about this?” I held one of the leather straps in my hand. I had all four limbs bound but not tied to the bed. Not yet.

Emma barely hesitated. She lifted her head. “I’m sure, Henry. I’m not afraid. I haven’t forgotten the safe word.”

She still thought she knew how deep this went; how dark it could become. She’d learn. I had every intention of showing her tonight, as long as she continued to be willing.

I’d seen how much she enjoyed having attention focused on her. She came alive with pleasure as we watched. I stroked my thumb over the screen on the app that controlled the dildo, sending a rush of pleasure through her. Time to let go and show her everything. “Good girl.” I kissed her, thrusting my tongue into her mouth while I reached down and grabbed the dildo. I worked it in and out of her pussy while it twirled and vibrated.

Her back arched off the bed, and she reached out both hands for me.

“None of that.” I planted the dildo as deep as it would go and moved out of reach. “Arms over your head. Legs as wide as they’ll go. Samuel, you and Alex tie her legs. Derek, take the other arm. Stretch the bonds until they’re taut but not too tight.” I watched them follow my directions and gave them approving nods when we had Emma secured. “Now the fun really begins. You can’t touch us, but we’re going to do so

many things to you. And later, if you're a good girl, we'll take it to the next level."

"Please." She rocked her hips, and I sensed another orgasm building.

"Turn your head to the right. Alex, climb onto the bed and let Emma suck your cock. She needs something in her mouth." I lowered the intensity on the dildo to keep her from coming and faced the others. "Samuel, fuck her hard and fast. Come if you want, but don't let Emma come yet."

"You told me about this. Edging, right?" Emma asked as Alex slid into position.

"Yes." I took in the atmosphere of the room. "We're going to keep Emma on the cusp of orgasm without letting her tip over. This helps build sexual excitement and allows her to tolerate more... intense situations later."

She grinned up at Alex. "Let's do this." She took his cock without hesitation, sucking it deep into her mouth. Her hands fisted in the bonds.

"Derek, step up and let her hold your cock." I fed my cock into her clenched hand and hissed when she tightened around me.

We all watched as Samuel tossed his clothes aside and climbed on top of Emma. Straps ran around her neck and cupped her breasts while leaving them bare. A second series of straps threaded around her thighs and calves before ending at her ankles. They were all tied to the bedposts with quick-release knots. I demanded the safety precautions for all of our sakes.

Samuel removed the dildo and set it aside while I turned it off. That little pink device had served its purpose for the night. He eased into her, straining to keep himself under control. "God you're tight, Emma. I love how you squeeze me."

Her hand flexed again on my cock, showing her enjoyment as she stroked me with long, languid strokes, cupping my head and then rolling down to the hilt.

I had plans for plenty more excitement, and we were all going to come harder than ever. As long as everyone followed my directions. “Give her a little more, Samuel. Take her to the brink, then back off.”

Samuel’s ass flexed and he slammed into Emma. “I’m going to take your ass again, Emma. Remember how much you liked that?”

“We’ll roll her over soon and let you take a turn. We’ll all get a turn.” I rocked into her hand and leaned over to smooth a hand down her face. Her eyes were glazed with the force of her arousal, and she sucked on Alex’s cock like the world revolved around the pleasure she gave him.

“More, Alex. She can take more.” I locked eyes with Emma as Alex pushed deeper into her mouth. “Take it down all the way. Do that and we’ll take the next step.”

She widened her jaw and swallowed Alex’s cock while Samuel continued to thrust deep into her.

“She’s there.” Samuel pulled out and sat back on his heels. “Sorry, Henry, I couldn’t stay without coming, and I’m not ready yet.”

“It’s fine.” I withdrew from her hand and backed up. “Emma, we’re going to roll you over now and set up a different situation. Then it’s my turn.” I untied the strip closest to me and motioned for the others to do the same.

“Are you going to tell me what comes next?” Emma asked as we put her on her stomach with her knees drawn up to her chest and her ass in the air.

I stretched her arms straight out and used the hooks at her waist to attach new straps to keep her in place. “It’s better if you don’t know.” I stripped off my clothes and climbed into the bed behind her. One move and my cock would be seated in that amazing ass. Not yet. I rubbed my hand over her creamy backside, then drew my hand back and slapped her ass hard enough to cause her to buck forward and yelp.

Samuel and the others stood back and watched, but no one interfered. Her cry was eager, and she immediately raised her

ass for another smack.

This woman was going to ruin me. I reached between her legs and cupped her sex, plunging one finger inside and stroking her hard. “You want to come, don’t you?”

“Yes.” She whimpered and ground her ass over my hand.

“Yes, what?” I removed my fingers and slapped her ass again. It jiggled and bounced, and my erection tightened almost painfully. I wanted her more than I’d ever wanted any woman in my life. The power of that need tried to hold me back, but if Emma was going to choose me, she had to know all of me.

Emma looked back over her shoulder with a wildness in her eyes. “Yes, sir.”

“That’s my good girl.” I squeezed her ass, going from cheek to cheek and smoothing my hand over the prints I’d made with my bare hand. “You’re good at this, Emma. You still remember what to do?”

“More, Henry.” She buried her head in the sheets and gripped them in her fists. “Please, sir. Can I have more?”

A wild rush of darkness roared up and I clapped her cunt with the palm of my hand. The sudden shock of pain drove her up off the bed. “Yes. Fuck, yes. That’s it, baby. Show me your dark side. Give me all of it. I’m ready.”

I’d never been more turned on in my life than when I heard those words. “Derek, hand me the nipple clamps.” I held out my hand and he slapped them into my palm like I was a surgeon. I reached around Emma and applied the clamps to each of her nipples, then clipped them to the hooks. “Every time you move, those are going to pull your nipples, Emma. It’s up to you how much you use that for your pleasure.” I clapped her pussy again, then pressed my thumb against her ass.

She bucked, then bucked again when the clamps pulled tight. “That feels so good. I’ve never felt like this before.”

“Derek, shut her up with your dick. As much as I like the sound of your voice, Emma, you’re going to help please us

too. Okay?” I kept up the affirmations as another precaution.

“Fuck my face, Derek. I need to feel a dick. I want to choke on it so hard I can barely breathe.” The words were barely out of her mouth when Derek shoved her full of his cock.

I slapped her ass while pulling a finger through her folds, dragging her juices up to her back hole and coating my dick in the richness. “I’m going to take your ass, Emma. But first I need one more thing. Alex, get beneath Emma. You get her pussy while I take her ass. Ready?”

Emma made a raw noise and bobbed her head over Derek’s dick. Samuel was left standing back for now, but that would change in just a bit. He didn’t seem too put out by being the outsider of the moment.

Derek scooted back so Alex could get into position. I watched his cock enter her pussy and felt the sensation shudder through Emma. She arched and ground down on him, then opened her mouth for Derek again. He and Alex moved together, pushing deep into Emma then backing out to the tip, only to repeat the motion so slow that it agonized Emma and drove her need even higher. They were better at this than I thought. We all wanted Emma to enjoy tonight, and the orgasm we were about to give her would change everything she knew about sex.

I was an arrogant bastard, but I also knew how to make this the best night of Emma’s life. I eased the tip of my cock into her ass and waited for her to adjust before I worked my way deeper. The angle put me in a perfect position to hit the deep ring of muscles that sent Emma wild with pleasure. She couldn’t move thanks to the restraints and every time she tried, the nipple clips pulled and twisted. Alex rubbed his hands over her ribs and back, then pinched the clip and tugged it to make her gasp over Derek’s cock.

Her ass muscles tightened around me, and I stopped moving until she relaxed a bit, only to slap her ass when she least expected it. The three of us worked together until she was a mess of need.

“Samuel, get up there beside Derek and get in on the action. Emma, go back and forth between Derek and Samuel. Make it good for them.” I grabbed her hips and fucked her hard and fast. Alex met my pace from beneath, and we bobbed Emma’s head down over Samuel’s dick as he groaned and fisted handfuls of her hair.

“Give her hair a little pull, Samuel. See how she likes that.” I sent a searing smack on her left ass cheek that left an immediate handprint and followed it up with giving her the full length of my cock. I felt Alex spasm through the thin veil separating us. He was about to lose it. “Alex, if you need to stop, do it now.”

“I’m okay.” He wrung the nipple clips and kissed Emma’s neck. Her skin flushed a beautiful rosy color.

“You can come now, Emma. You deserve it.” As though she’d been waiting on those words, Emma quaked from head to toe.

I increased my pace, pumping into her, me and Alex giving her the strokes she needed to come harder than ever before. Samuel arched his head and pulled out of Emma’s mouth in time for her to release the first scream.

Alex clenched his teeth. “Fuck, I’m coming, Emma. I can’t resist this pussy.” He banged his head on the bed and surged his hips upward so hard he almost unseated me.

Emma’s orgasm ran through her in waves that had her muscles clenching and unclenching as she tried to milk us dry. I resisted as long as I could, then bowed my back over hers. The change in angle took me deeper than before. “I’m coming in your ass, Emma. And then we’re going to start all over again. I have a whole selection of toys over there, things that will make you scream until your throat is raw. I grabbed her hair and pulled her head back until her body was stretched to the limit.

Alex, Derek, and Samuel watched me and Emma, and the rapid rise and fall of their chests told me they were excited about the continuation. I emptied my cum into her without

regret or remorse. She came again as I thrust through my full ejaculation.

“How are you feeling?” I asked as I released her hair and rubbed her back and shoulders.

She gave me a devilish grin and rubbed her clamped nipples over Alex’s chest. “I’ve never felt better. And I want more.”

I waited for her panting breaths to ease before I pulled out of her and began releasing the straps and clamps so she could rest. “Take a short break, Emma. We’re not done, but there’s no need to rush.”

“But Derek and Samuel...” She waved at them while rolling off Alex. “They haven’t come yet.”

“Don’t worry about us.” Derek sat back on the bed and stretched. “We’ll get our turn, and we’re more than willing to wait.”

“I gotta admit, I like this.” Samuel circled one finger around Emma’s nipple, then lowered his head and licked the diamond hard peak. “Henry promised a night of fun, and that’s what we’re all going to get. I’m willing to drag this out for hours.”

“I saw something you might be interested in.” Alex raised up onto his elbows and motioned at the wall. “What do you think about getting fucked with another dildo? One that’s bigger than all of us?” He rubbed a hand between her legs. “I wonder how much this pussy can take. Could you hold two of us in there at the same time? What about two in your pussy and one in your ass? Then you blow the other one and all of us get off at the same time.”

Damn. This kid has been seriously thinking this through. I’d wondered along the same lines but planned to work up to it. Alex presented it as a question and gave Emma a chance to have a voice in the decision.

“I think I’d like to try that.” She cupped his cheek. “Going to take some maneuvering, and we might have to build up to

it.” Her gaze darted over to the dresser and the dildo in question. “But that looks like a good start.”

Fuck, I had so many ideas. One of them fucking her with the dildo while I whipped her ass into a frenzy. Then, when we were done, I’d teach them about aftercare.

“You’re amazing.” Samuel kissed her and traced the curve of her jaw with his finger.

She stretched out her body, raising and lowering her arms and rotating her ankles. “I don’t know how I’m going to give this up when I move back to my apartment after Christmas.”

EMMA

Well, that happened. I rolled and stretched in Henry's bed, my body deliciously sore in all the right places. Henry was right. I'd never had sex like that. It was amazing, and I never wanted to stop. Letting them love me was becoming my favorite pastime. They worked my body and made me feel exciting and beautiful all while pleasuring me to the point of insanity.

"Morning, beautiful." A low whisper grazed my ear at the same time a warm hand gripped my hip and stroked down my thigh.

"Samuel." I breathed out his name and rolled my hips back, cupping his iron-hard cock with my ass.

He chuckled and nibbled on my earlobe. "Ready to go again?"

"Yes." Always. I'd never get tired of this. "What about the others?"

They were all asleep in Henry's massive bed, piled in with arms and legs thrown everywhere.

Samuel nuzzled the back of my neck with his nose and brought his hand around to touch between my legs. "That's up to you, sweetheart." His breath whispered over my ear, and he raised up on one elbow to kiss my jaw, then my lips. "Whatever you want."

His kisses were almost as addictive as his cock. The hard length slid between my ass cheeks and his fingers parted my

folds to reach my clit.

“I want to take a shower. With you.” I barely held back a gasp of pleasure when he pressed his fingers deeper.

His hand disappeared, and his warm weight left the bed behind me. The sudden loss of him left me bereft, but then he scooped me up into his arms and carried me toward a door I hadn't noticed before. “You're going to love this.” He nudged the door open with his toe and used his elbow to flick on the light.

I blinked several times to clear the sudden sparkles of light after being in Henry's dark room sleeping all night. The bathroom was large and extravagant, with a massive, claw-footed tub in one corner and a shower/bath big enough for three on the right-side wall. A pedestal sink stood opposite the shower, and a closed door led to what I assume was the toilet.

What an amazing house. I had to find out how long he'd lived here. And if he'd always lived alone. It seemed a waste to have this much room and no one to share it with. My cheeks heated. It wasn't like he'd be asking me to share it with him. He'd taken such good care of me last night, making sure I was okay and covering me in lotions and creams after we finished having sex. He'd told the others all about aftercare and how important it was, especially after a rough session.

Last night had been rough at some points, but nothing I hadn't asked for. The more he pushed, the more I wanted to give.

Samuel set me on my feet in the shower tub and turned on the water. A square showerhead in the center of the ceiling rained hot water down over my head and shoulders.

“One shower. As the lady demands.” He climbed in after me and closed the door.

I stood on my tiptoes and looped my arms around his neck, pulling his lips down to meet mine. Trickle of water ran down our faces and between our bodies. I reached between us and guided his cock between my legs. He slid in and set a slow rhythm that drove me crazy.

Half an hour later, both freshly washed and grinning from sex, I tugged on one of Henry's bath robes and danced into the bedroom. Henry, Alex, and Derek were still asleep, though Henry's light tossing told me he might be waking up soon.

"Henry?" I sat near his calves and stroked the back of his hand.

His eyes opened a crack, then widened. He took me in from head to toe, and a slight smile crinkled the edges of his mouth. "Emma. You're up early."

"I want to cook breakfast for everyone. Is that okay?" The veins tracking across the back of his hand fascinated me, and I traced them with my thumb all the way up his forearm and back down again.

He scooted up in bed but made sure to leave his arm within my reach. "You don't have to do that. We should be taking care of you today."

"I don't mind." I wanted to do something for them, and I was hungry. Cooking breakfast solved both problems at the same time. "Is it okay if I use your kitchen?"

"Use anything you want, baby." He threaded his fingers through my damp hair and eased his thumb over my cheek.

The sexual innuendo wasn't lost on me, and I smirked at him while leaning forward and giving him a lingering kiss. "Come down and join me when you're ready."

"Me too?" Derek lifted his head from the bed and yawned. His erection tented the sheet covering his waist and he rubbed a hand over his swollen cock.

I yanked the sheet down and ran my tongue over his shaft from base to tip, then covered the head with my lips and sucked. When he cupped the back of my head and arched deeper into my mouth, I pulled back and smiled wickedly. "I'm hungry. Food first, and then we can climb on Henry's table and fuck the rest of the day if that's what everyone wants."

Derek's groan matched Alex's, and they both rolled out of the bed and started throwing on clothes. Henry was the last to

leave the bed, but he did it with a predatory grace that thrilled me.

“I’m going downstairs.” I backed toward the door before I changed my mind and ended up in bed all morning. My grumbling stomach demanded food. Especially if I wanted to fully enjoy hours of sex today.

Alex rolled his hips and winked at me. “I’m guessing this is not the downstairs you were talking about?”

“At the moment, no.” I held up a finger. “But later. We’ll do so many things later.” I turned and shook my ass at them. “Follow me to the kitchen.”

It didn’t take long for all five of us to converge on the kitchen. I pilfered Henry’s pantry until I found what I wanted. Pancake mix and syrup. Henry slapped bacon and eggs onto the counter and moved to the stove.

“I’ll cook.” I tried to nudge him aside, but Derek slipped up behind me and ran both hands down the front of my robe. He cupped my breasts and brushed his thumbs over my pebbled nipples.

Henry parted my robe and dipped his head to take a nipple in his mouth.

A ragged breath hissed through my teeth and my knees weakened. If this was their idea of waiting until later, then I didn’t know what I’d do when they wanted something right now.

Samuel pushed us away from the stove and began cooking while the others played. Alex joined our tight circle, untying the robe and letting it fall open. He palmed my mound and fingered my clit.

“I thought we were having breakfast,” I panted and moaned, grabbing Henry’s hair to keep him on my breast. His tongue rasped over my nipple, then moved to the other one. Derek’s hands were in my hair, rubbing and massaging my scalp and then down my neck.

“They are.” Samuel dropped bacon into the pan and jerked his head to the side. “Might want to move back a little.”

We were still close enough to the stove that popping grease was a potential problem.

Henry raised his head, and his glazed eyes were the last straw. But then he shook his head and closed my robe. “More of that later.”

Alex and Derek both retreated, leaving me breathless and wanting. I knew they’d make it up to me later. And I waited for that moment with hopeful anticipation.

The bare kitchen table attracted my attention. I tugged my robe tighter and tied the belt. Without their mouths and hands on me, I could finally think again. Breakfast first. A little conversation. “Henry, how long have you lived here?”

His face scrunched together, and he wobbled his head side to side. “Twenty-five years.”

Fuck. Longer than I’d been alive. I tried not to let the shock show on my face. I hadn’t thought much about Samuel and Henry’s ages. It had never mattered to me. What mattered was how they treated me. And they treated me like a queen. I’d be crazy to think about letting that go just because society would consider the age gap a problem. It wasn’t a problem for me. “It’s a nice house. Alex and Derek said they don’t decorate for Christmas. What about you?” I wasn’t sure why I asked. I wanted to get to know him, all of them, but I almost felt bad for them all giving up the celebration of decorating just because they were not home on Christmas day.

“I’m considering it,” Henry said.

Shock ran through the room. Samuel, Derek, and Alex all froze in place in varying states of cooking.

“You are?” Samuel asked.

Henry grunted. “Don’t read too much into it.”

Time for a distraction. “Alex, will you help me set the table?” I grabbed his hand and pulled him over to the cabinets that lined the wall between the stove and refrigerator.

He came with me willingly and opened the last cabinet to reveal stacks of plates and saucers. “What did you mean? Last

night? What did you mean about giving us up?"

His quiet voice drew me in more than I expected. I stopped in the middle of opening the next cabinet. Cold coursed through my veins. I tried to hide the discomfort the question caused. "It's all a bit of fun, right?" I lifted a shoulder, trying to be casual. "I never expected it to be anything else. It's not like the four of you are going to fall in love with me." I forced out a scoff and ducked my head into the fluffy robe to keep him from seeing my expression.

I could never admit it to him or the others, but I'd already fallen for them. All of them. Impossible as it was, I was halfway in love with them. One more knee-knocking, pussy-melting look from any of them and I'd never leave Henry's house.

Alex dropped the stack of plates on the counter. "I have to go." His face shuttered, turning cold and indifferent. "Last night was fun." The words were like tiny daggers. They were thrown out with the intent to wound. Without another word, he hurried out of the kitchen toward the front door.

The door slammed and Samuel turned. His gaze caught mine and he frowned while continuing to scan the room. "Where's Alex?"

Henry and Derek faced us from across the room. They'd been deep in conversation but stopped when they heard the tension in Samuel's voice.

"He said he had to go." My chin quivered and my hands shook. Had what I said bothered him that much? Nah. Alex didn't care enough about me for it to matter. We'd had an amazing night. Maybe he was tired. Though he hadn't seemed too worn out when he came downstairs.

Samuel passed the spatula to Henry and walked toward me. "Tell me exactly what happened." There was a coolness in his voice now too. What the hell was going on?

I explained everything, telling him word for word what Alex and I talked about.

Samuel tented a hand over his eyes and rubbed his temples with his thumb and forefinger.

“What’s wrong?” I needed to keep calm. “Did I say something wrong?” Old insecurities roared up and pushed aside all the good from last night. I’d messed it up, like I always did. Alex found me lacking in some way, and he’d left so he didn’t have to endure being with me any longer.

“You shouldn’t have said that to him.” Samuel turned away from me and motioned at Henry. “I’m going after Alex.” He kissed my cheek and it felt like a goodbye.

Shit. I was going to cry. I’d taken a perfect thing and ruined it. I drove Alex away, and where Alex went, Samuel went.

HENRY

I barely noticed Alex and then Samuel leaving. I couldn't stop thinking about last night and Emma. She'd responded to me in every way. Like she was made for me and my kinks. The harder I pushed, the hotter Emma became. She'd been wild by the end of the night. I'd never had anyone accept me that readily; someone willing to give me so much.

There was never a moment of hesitation between us last night. Even the guys were willing to let me direct them and order them around. I'd expected some backlash at least from Samuel, but as soon as he saw Emma responding, he was all in.

"Should I go after them?" Derek shuffled the bacon onto a plate. His attention pulled to the front door and then over to me. "They're missing out."

"No. Let them go." Whatever was up Alex's ass was his problem. I hated to be that way, but we'd all done what we could to try and help already. If Alex wanted to fly off after last night, then maybe he wasn't the guy I thought. Well, shit. Maybe I should give the kid a break. He'd been through a lot. I was just fucking annoyed that he and Samuel had bailed. I'm glad Samuel took off after Alex. The two of them would get their shit worked out.

Emma kept standing at the back of the kitchen. Her throat worked and she clasped a hand over it. The earlier expression of sexual need fell into something else. Something I didn't recognize on her but had seen in other women. Rejection. She

dropped her hands to the pockets of my robe and shivered. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s not your fault, Emma.” Derek finished moving the cooked bacon to a plate and bit into a slice. He puffed air over the scorching bite and chomped. “We all thought he was over the breakup, but maybe not.”

I’d thought that would soothe her, but her agitation increased. “So why did he agree to sex if he’s not over his last girlfriend? Did he think it wouldn’t matter?”

“Don’t let Alex’s state of mind take away from last night.” I crossed the room and took her into my arms. “He knew what he was doing last night. He wanted you then, and he wants you now. He just has to get his head on straight. And he will. Give him time to think things through.”

This was going to work out. I felt it in my bones and in my heart. Emma was the one. There was one tiny problem I needed to work out. Our relationship with Emma broke company policy. We were not to have sexual relationships with others within the station’s employment.

Derek and Alex would get off light if anyone discovered they’d slept with Emma. Things were not as simple for me and Samuel. We were in positions of power, with Emma as our underling. But as the captain, I’d get looked at the hardest. Not just my superiority as captain, but the fact that I was over twenty years older than Emma. Neither of those things would win me any favors.

Emma barely let herself relax in my arms before she stiffened and pulled away.

“Let’s eat. Maybe Alex and Samuel will come back.” She rubbed her cheek against her shoulder and made her way over to the table.

We all sat, the quiet tension different from what I’d felt when we first woke up. This felt like the beginning of the end. No. I wouldn’t allow that to happen. Emma meant too much to me. But I did need to talk to her about the situation. “Emma, what are your plans after Christmas?”

“I don’t know. Why?” Her fingers tightened on her fork, and she lifted her head to meet my eyes. “Right now, I’m trying to get through Christmas. Help my grandma and get back in my apartment.” Her cheeks pinked as she poked at her eggs. “I’m sure Derek and Alex will be glad to get their apartment back.”

“You can stay longer as far as I’m concerned.” Derek didn’t hesitate.

I loved the kid for his generous heart and moments like this when he spoke straight from his heart.

“I don’t think Alex is okay with that.” Emma kept pushing.

I couldn’t tell if she needed reassurance or if she was trying to push away from Alex to save herself. “Alex has to take time and think about things before he makes big decisions. He didn’t choose lightly when he decided to stay last night. The only reason he left was because he needed to think without distractions. And you are one hell of a distraction.” I meant it in a good way, but Emma blanched and started to scoot back from the table.

“Talk to us, Emma.” Derek’s soulful eyes lit on Emma and held. The kid had depth, I’d give him that.

She huffed and covered her face with her hands. “I don’t understand why all this happened. Why did Alex get upset when I pointed out the obvious? You’re going to get tired of me. This is going to end.”

Each word was a punch in the gut. “That’s not what the rest of us are thinking. I know I’m not.” I grasped one of her hands and Derek took the other. “I’m sitting here trying to figure out how to keep you around longer.”

“What do you mean?” That spark of passion that I’d seen in her from the beginning lit up. She turned from uncertain to determined in a matter of seconds. “You want to keep me around?”

“Yes, Emma. I want to keep you around. In fact, I needed to talk to you about something.” The pressure of her hand in mine kept me grounded and focused on the problem. “Our

relationship is a threat to my job. Not just that, but my entire career and my reputation. You work for me, and that complicates things.”

She processed my words, her mouth puckering and her brows drawing together.

“It’s a shit question, but I hoped you’d be willing to look for another job after Christmas, so the threat of exposure isn’t as great.” I made sure to frame everything so that she didn’t feel like I was pushing her away. She had every right to make her own decisions as long as I put all the cards out on the table.

Derek was still there. His presence helped create an easy atmosphere. There were times when I thought he didn’t take anything seriously, but seeing him with Emma showed me a whole new side to him.

Emma pulled her hands away from each of us and put them in her lap. Her eyes blazed with a mix of anger and hurt as she fixed her gaze on me. “You want me to find another job?” Her offended tone jerked a knot in my heart.

The heavy words hung in the air already weighted with tension that knotted my shoulders.

“So, it was okay for me to work with you and fuck you in your office, but it’s not okay now?” Her voice crackled, accusing me.

“It wasn’t like that.” I swallowed hard, struggling to find the right words. “I’ve been worried about it since the first day we worked together,” I admitted, my voice regretful. The scent of bacon and eggs lingering in the air turned my stomach. The contrast of being happy half an hour ago and feeling the ground shift beneath my feet kept me from being able to eat.

Emma stood and paced back and forth across the kitchen, her steps filled with restless energy. She nibbled on her thumbnail and shook her head. “This is messed up,” she muttered. An annoyed huff slipped past her lips as she tried to make sense of it all. “I get why you’re asking me to find

another job. It's perfectly logical. But there's a part of me that is completely pissed and feels used."

I leaped to my feet, as did Derek, and crossed to her. I ached to be closer, to offer comfort or support, should she want it. We let her keep moving, giving her space to express her feelings and frustrations. In this tumultuous moment, all we wanted was to be there for her. Even if she couldn't stand to look at me.

"Emma, will you look at me?" My dominating nature wanted to demand her attention. I kept those tendencies under control.

Seconds stretched into minutes as Emma continued to pace, the room echoing with the sound of her footsteps and the heavy weight of unspoken words mingled with her refusal to look at me. Derek and I exchanged glances. Concern and understanding flashed in his eyes. This was a pivotal moment. One that could redefine our relationships and futures.

Emma finally paused, her back to us, her shoulders tense. Her voice wavered, "I thought... I thought we had something special, something more than just work. I thought..." Her voice trailed off.

I took a step closer and held out my hand. "We do have something special. That's why this is so difficult. I don't want you to think you're just another employee."

Derek nodded, his eyes locked onto Emma's form. "We care about you," he added, his voice steady and gentle. "This isn't about dismissing you or using you. It's about protecting all of us."

Emma turned, her eyes glistening. She seemed torn between anger and sadness. "Well, I did say that this had to end sometime. Maybe we call it quits before things get any worse."

"No." I couldn't fathom that. Not when I was finally at a place where I'd met a woman who understood me. "That's not what I want Emma."

"Me either," Derek added.

“And if it’s what I want?” The tears in her eyes finally fell. “I can’t fall in love with all of you, just for you to come to your senses in a year or even in a month and say that you’re done. It’s not fair to me or to any of you.”

Damn. She was admitting to already having feelings for us. For all of us. I should be happy, but all I could think about was the complications of having her at the station.

My phone rang, the shrill tune dragging my gaze away from Emma. I almost ignored it, but I recognized the ringtone. District Chief Miles. Why was my superior calling me on my day off? Nothing good could come from this.

“We’ll continue this discussion in a minute.” I took my phone from the counter and answered. “Henry here.”

“Henry, it’s Miles.”

I nodded and turned my back on Emma and Derek, who was comforting Emma with an arm over her shoulders. He whispered in her ear and she smiled weakly. Good. Maybe we’d work this out after all.

“We have a situation. I need you to come in.” Miles’s voice held a note of anger and weary resignation that I didn’t understand.

“What’s wrong?” Alex was my first thought. Had he gone to my supervisor to complain?

Miles huffed a long breath. “A sexual harassment claim has been filed against you. You need to come and address the complaint.”

Ice filled my body and I could barely breathe. Who would file a complaint against me? The only woman I’d had sex with was Emma. Only one other woman worked at the station, and I never worked on the same shifts as her. Would a guy file a complaint? I palmed my chest. “I’ll be there in a few minutes.” Fuck. What in the world was going on?

ALEX

I'd made an absolute fool of myself. Last night's magic still seeped through my veins, but it was dampened by Emma's reminder that none of this was real. It wouldn't last. I wasn't sure what to do with that information.

Thank fuck I'd put my clothes on before coming downstairs so I could bolt when I needed to. I even had my keys in my pocket so I didn't have to return to the bedroom and face the reality of last night. I couldn't stay in Henry's house one more second. Staying would mean confronting the change in feelings knocking around in my chest every time I looked at Emma. I didn't want to give her up. But I couldn't very well be in love with a woman I'd known less than a month. It took me almost a year to tell Danielle I loved her. It should take me at least that long to recover from our breakup.

I steered my car into the parking lot a block away from the fire station and climbed out. Christmas music floated out of a nearby store, the happy tunes infuriating me. Nothing about our relationship with Emma was going as planned. "Because it's not a real relationship," I hissed to myself. I shouldn't need the reminder. Emma was clear from the beginning that this was never going to last. I should have listened. Why didn't I ever listen?

Cold snaked down the back of my neck, and I flipped my collar up to block the snowflakes burrowing down my spine. Bare tree branches rattled and creaked overhead, the mournful sound a stark reminder of my own hollowness. Fuck me.

I ducked into the fire station and shrugged out of my coat while cutting into the weight room before anyone spotted me. The last thing I wanted was to answer questions on why I'd come by the station on my day off. The next time I was scheduled to be here, it would be Christmas day. A day of joy and happiness. A day we'd hand out Christmas presents to kids in need and smile until our cheeks hurt.

What would Emma be doing on Christmas day? If we weren't working, could we have spent the day together? No. She had a grandmother and a mother to spend the season with, she didn't need us.

I checked the weight on the barbell then dropped into place on the bench. Gripping the bar with both hands, I lifted it off the rack and pumped it until my arms shook and my chest burned.

I still couldn't get the sight of Emma out of my head. Every breath brought her closer until I almost smelled her perfume.

"Get out of my head." I swung the bar back into place and rolled to a sitting position. If lifting weights didn't distract me, what else might? I couldn't go back to my apartment. Emma might decide to go there. Though she'd probably spend the rest of our time off with Henry. I couldn't blame her after last night. Our apartment was too small for me right now. Not to mention I saw Emma in every room. That place was ruined for me without Emma.

What I needed to do was to figure out how to get her to stay. We'd all had a great time last night. There was no reason that couldn't keep going.

Anger knotted my stomach. I shouldn't have to convince her of anything. Either she wanted to stay or she didn't. There was no middle ground here. I'd known after the first time I had sex with Emma that it was too good to be true. She was too perfect for this to last. She'd told me then that it was temporary, and my fucking heart refused to listen.

Derek was right. I'd needed some good sex with no strings attached. I never should have let my heart get involved.

Henry's voice carried from the main building. I straightened and peered around the edge of the door frame. The man I trusted with my life stood outside the district chief's office with his arms crossed and a frown pulling creases in his cheeks. I was used to seeing Henry solemn, but not sullen. What was he doing here when he had Emma at his house?

Nothing good.

I crept out of the weight room and jogged around to the other side of the building. The firefighters on duty were all on their way into the kitchen for breakfast, making it easy to avoid them. I knew of a spot where I could listen in on their conversation without being seen. I'd found it when Danielle and I were seeing each other. We'd sneak up there sometimes and have sex while I was on duty. The office door opened and District Chief Miles motioned Henry inside.

Their expressions drove me to move faster. I didn't want to miss a second of this conversation. I bypassed the steps to keep them from hearing me and climbed up the narrow space between two walls, then dropped into a tiny square of space that led nowhere but gave me access to their voices through the thin wall.

"Can I get you a cup of coffee, Henry?" Miles sounded overly polite, which meant he had bad news. The guy was straightforward to the point of being too blunt at times. Whatever he had to say to Henry, he was trying to soften it the only way he knew how.

Steps scuffled and Henry's voice sounded almost in my ear. "No. I'm fine." A throat cleared, then Henry again. "What's going on here, Miles?"

"It's been reported that you've had sexual relations with a woman while on duty. In your office." Miles's voice was sharp enough to cut steel.

I couldn't see either of them, but I could imagine the fucking scene with perfect detail. Miles liked to stand with his hands on his desk, his body leaned forward like he was trying to be personable.

Henry would be at the wall, his back pressed into the cold concrete and his eyes burning with that inner fire I'd seen a handful of times during his career. The man kept himself so tightly under wraps that it had been a relief to see him come undone with Emma last night. He'd been controlling and dominating, but he sank into Emma like he'd die without her.

What kind of woman gave that up?

I waited for Henry to dispute the claim, but a long stretch of silence sounded instead.

Finally, Henry spoke again. "You said on the phone that a sexual harassment claim had been filed against me. Is this a separate accusation?"

What? I straightened so fast, I almost cracked my head on the steel beam overhead. I gripped it with both hands to keep from tearing into the office to defend Henry. He didn't need my interference. It would look worse for him if I did bust in.

"That's not important." Miles's seat strained, telling me he must've sat down.

Henry scoffed. "It's pretty damned fucking important to me. Who filed the complaint?"

If Miles realized Henry wasn't disputing the claim, he didn't bring it up. But the man was smart. He'd figure it out sooner or later. He hadn't outright asked Henry to confirm or deny the claim. It was the only thing giving Henry a chance at keeping his job.

They'd tolerate shit like that from me or Derek, though with a severe warning not to let it continue. I knew because I'd been in this office before Danielle broke up with me. We'd gotten caught sneaking out of the fire truck and one of the rookies ratted me out. If Henry admitted to breaking protocol, he'd be fired on the spot. There were no excuses in Miles's eyes that excused a man in Henry's position.

Miles's chair squeaked and the silence grew unbearable.

I tried not to think about what I'd do without Henry leading us. I trusted the man with my life, and I couldn't see myself following any other man as captain except maybe

Samuel. My phone vibrated in my pocket and I slapped a hand over it, silencing it before it could ring.

“Who filed the complaint, sir?” Henry asked again, his tone bitter.

“I’m not at liberty to discuss that information,” Miles answered.

The fuck he wasn’t. So someone was allowed to accuse Henry, but he didn’t get to know who?

Fuck and damn it all. I knew who Henry’d fucked in his office. There had only ever been one woman in that office who Henry would have sex with, and it was Emma. She’d betrayed Henry, betrayed all of us.

The revelation hung in the air, a heavy cloud casting a shadow over the once-familiar surroundings. Bile rose in my throat. She’d been with us all night and all morning, which meant she’d filed the complaint before asking to have sex with all of us.

What a liar and a hypocrite. No wonder she’d said this couldn’t last. She planned on ruining it.

Well, I wouldn’t let her ruin Henry.

My body turned hot, then cold and hot again. Conflicting emotions surged through me. How could she do this to Henry? To us? I couldn’t believe I’d misjudged her, that we all had. Henry trusted her. He’d shown her his darkness and she’d spit in his face. My trust in Emma shattered as I threw myself back onto the main level.

Laughter burst out from the kitchen, the current group enjoying the moment of peace. They all knew how quickly it could be broken. One ring of the bell and they’d bolt out of the kitchen, throw on their gear, and rush out to put their lives in danger.

A sense of betrayal reverberated through me, stifling every breath. I hadn’t felt this betrayed even when Danielle broke up with me. Never felt this tension mixed with a palpable sense of disillusionment.

The cold bite of reality contrasted sharply with the heat of my anger and disappointment. I grabbed my coat from the rack and shoved my arms into the sleeves. I barely felt the cold air stinging my cheeks or the snow peppering the top of my head as it fell in thick sheets that obscured my vision.

Everything seemed unforgiving and harsh. I pulled my coat tighter around me, a feeble attempt to shield myself from the emotional storm. Rage and the chill wind rocked me back and forth until I reached my car and dropped into the driver's seat.

The city outside continued its usual hustle and bustle. Smiling people hurried up and down the sidewalk, most likely on their way to finish Christmas shopping.

I slammed my palm on the steering wheel and ripped open the glovebox. The necklace I'd bought Emma yesterday sat in its little red box and mocked me for a fool.

"You're not getting away with this." I cranked the engine and put the car in gear. As I eased toward the road, I spotted Samuel and Henry standing outside the main bay. The bright red fire engine outlined their bodies, and I knew by the look on Samuel's face that Henry had told him the news.

They both turned toward me when I hit the street and punched the gas. Samuel started to move away from Henry and held up a hand like he wanted me to stop.

No way. Not this time. Emma was going to face the consequences of this, whether she liked it or not. What was the purpose of her harassment case? Had she thought they'd wait until after Christmas, giving her plenty of time to rack up sex time with all of us before she called it quits?

I didn't know the answer, but I was about to find out.

EMMA

I handed Derek the last plate from our breakfast and grinned while watching him dry it. His arms flexed a ridiculous amount for such a small task. “Are you trying to turn me on?”

He made his pecs pop up and down beneath his t-shirt. “Is it working?”

“Maybe.” I emptied the dirty sink water and dried my hands on a nearby dish towel. “What do you think happened?”

Henry had rushed out in a flurry of movement after getting a phone call that neither of us heard. He’d told us to stay as long as we wanted, and I’d convinced Derek to help me clean up Henry’s kitchen. He kept everything so tidy that I hated to leave a mess behind.

I unrolled the robe’s fluffy sleeves until they fell past my hands and watched Derek stretch to put the stack of plates on the top shelf. The move revealed a bare strip of skin along his side. I bit my lip and shoved my hands into my pockets to keep from running over and grabbing him. Now wasn’t the time for sex, even if we both wanted it. Alex had stormed out after getting mad at me, with Samuel following to try and talk to him. Then Henry’s mysterious phone call. Standing in Henry’s kitchen enjoying my time with Derek felt wrong even as he turned and gave me a sexy smile.

“So?” Derek leaned back against the counter and flexed again. “What now?”

“Hmm.” I wiggled my hips and hopped onto the counter.

“That looks familiar.” He wiggled his eyebrows at me and I giggled.

The counter was cool against the backs of my legs, and I tossed my head back while thrusting out my chest. The robe allowed me to flash him my cleavage, and I gave him a sassy smile. “I guess we could have a little fun while we wait on Henry.”

He walked right between my legs and ran his hands under the robe barely covering my thighs. “I want to fuck you right here on Henry’s counter, Emma.”

I wrapped my heels around his waist and pulled him closer. His right hand slid higher, parting my folds and delving into the slick heat. We shouldn’t be doing this. Not when the others had all left in a mild state of panic, but there was nothing either of us could do to help them, and I refused to feel guilty for wanting to fuck Derek.

The front door slammed open, sending a gust of wind and snow swirling through the kitchen.

I yelped and jumped off the counter as fear raced down my spine.

Alex stalked in. Red infused his cheeks and his entire body shook. His coat hung open and snow covered his bare head. “What the fuck did you do?”

He glared at me with enough hatred that I took a step back, straight into Derek’s chest. His hands landed on my hips and helped steady me.

“Alex?” Derek asked.

I’d never heard Alex’s voice sound so dark and dangerous. Derek rubbed my hips through the thick robe.

“What are you talking about?” I asked. My breath came out in a rush that turned my voice squeaky. Whatever Alex heard in the tone caused him to narrow his eyes and take a step forward.

“You know what I’m talking about.” He pointed directly at my chest. “How could you file a sexual harassment claim

against Henry?”

“What?” I belted out the question as shock ran through me. Derek’s hands never left me. He didn’t flinch or back down from the accusation. I was grateful for his support, but why did I need it? “I have no idea what you’re talking about. I didn’t file a complaint.”

“I heard all about it.” Alex shot a glare at Derek, then turned back to me while stalking forward.

Derek moved to block him. “Back the hell up, Alex.”

“What’s going on?” Henry asked from the open doorway. Unlike Alex, Henry looked completely put together. The only difference from when he’d left was the tight lines fanning out from his eyes. Those showed his anger despite his apparent calm.

Samuel stood right behind him, a stoic presence that added an air of tension to the already charged atmosphere. I didn’t like the looks on either of their faces. The room felt like a pressure cooker ready to explode. I’d been around them long enough to recognize the fiery tension.

This was not how I expected our day to end. Not after last night.

Alex whirled around to face them. A vein pulsed in his temple. “You know as well as I do that Emma’s the one who filed that complaint against you.”

“You don’t know that,” Derek shot back. His jaw clenched and his hands balled into fists while his entire back tightened into a rigid plane.

I tried to talk, to interject and clarify, but they all started hurling words at each other, a cacophony of accusations and denials that collided in my heart. The words flew too fast for me to get a word in.

“What do you mean a sexual harassment complaint?” Derek demanded, his voice cutting through the verbal onslaught.

“Miles pulled Henry into the office today and said he’d been accused of having sex in his office.” Alex narrowed his eyes accusingly at me. “We all know he fucked Emma in there last week.”

“That has nothing to do with it,” Samuel interjected.

I couldn’t stand by and let this continue. I shoved past Derek. “I never filed a complaint.”

Derek gestured toward me, a supportive acknowledgment. “See? It wasn’t Emma.”

“She’s lying,” Alex retorted. “Of course she’s not going to admit she did it.”

“Emma?” Henry turned his eyes to me, and the hurt in them speared me right through the heart.

“Why would I come here and ask to have sex with all of you if I’d filed a complaint?” I rubbed my face with both hands.

“She makes a good point.” Derek never left my side.

Samuel looked from face to face but didn’t comment for or against me. He seemed torn on who to listen to. I couldn’t blame him. It sounded pretty damning, even to me, and I knew I was innocent.

“Everybody, stop.” Henry raised both hands over his head.

We all froze and waited.

Henry stood stock still, his hands still in the air. I processed the whole situation and forced my tongue to work. “Can someone tell me, calmly, what happened?”

“I was fired.” Henry’s jaw worked and he palmed his cheek. The weight of his silence crushed me. I’d never seen him look like that before, and I wished I could make it all better. I’d do anything to fix the problem, if he’d give me some way to help.

“Someone filed a sexual harassment claim against Henry. The report states they had sex in Henry’s office and his sexual advances were unwanted, and they felt coerced.” Samuel said

the words with calm detachment, almost like it wasn't his captain and the man he admired being ripped to shreds.

“My reputation is ruined. I'll never work in a position of authority again. And if things escalate to the point that it goes further, I could face jail time.” Henry's voice rose with each word. Anger colored his cheeks, and the heat of their combined energy slammed into me like a fist.

I tried to work the pain from my throat so I could speak, but it was all too much. Henry and Alex really thought that I'd do something like that?

“It wasn't Emma.” Derek's staunch allegiance to me made no sense, but I'd never been more grateful.

“How can you say that?” Alex fisted his hands and moved like he was about to swing a fist at Derek.

Samuel grabbed his elbow and pulled him back. “We're not going to fight about this.”

“Whose side are you on?” Alex demanded.

“I'm not picking a side, except for the truth. And we'll get to the bottom of this.” He flicked a look at me. “One way or the other.”

“Unbelievable.” Alex shoved Samuel back and moved to stand beside Henry.

“How could you do this?” Resignation sounded in Henry's voice. And defeat. “I've never had a strike against me, Emma. Not one. Then you come along, and everything is ruined. Why?”

“Stop accusing her. Unless Miles showed you the complaint, you have no idea who filed it,” Derek said.

“And you know this, how?” Alex spat back.

Derek straightened and looked Alex dead in the eye. “Because I've been in Henry's position.”

That froze everyone in their tracks, but only long enough for Alex to catch his breath. “Well, great for you. But Miles

was clear that Henry was accused of having sex in his office. That same person filed the complaint.”

“Unless someone overheard Emma and Henry and decided to use it against Henry.” Derek remained calm, but he was fraying around the edges.

They devolved into another argument, with Derek defending me and Samuel working to keep the peace as Henry and Alex accused me.

It was all too much. They were falling apart, a relationship years in the making, unraveling in a matter of minutes because of me. Nausea churned and bubbled hard enough that I put a hand over my mouth to hold it back.

Not only was I being accused when I was completely innocent, but I felt like my presence was tearing them apart. This never would’ve happened if I hadn’t come along. I didn’t know who’d filed the complaint, but it had ruined more than our relationship.

“I would never hurt any of you,” I whispered.

Derek heard me and turned to slide an arm around my waist.

I pulled away and held up a hand for him to stop. Tears welled in my eyes, and I barely managed to keep them at bay while I met all their eyes. Alex and Henry’s gazes were accusatory, while Samuel’s just looked hurt and uncertain.

This situation forced him to choose. I couldn’t put any of them in that situation. Samuel and Henry had known each other for a dozen years. Alex too. Derek was the newcomer to the group, aside from me, but he still had a place here. I—obviously—did not.

“If we can find out who filed the complaint, we can sort this out.” Derek tried again to stand beside me.

I caught his hand and squeezed it to show my appreciation but stayed out of the comfort of his arms. I wouldn’t ruin his chance to remain part of this team.

“We know who filed the complaint.” Alex continued to hurl his anger around like a weapon.

I knew he'd been hurt by his breakup, but this was something else. This was a raw kind of agony that I didn't deserve.

Their voices started to rise again, and I'd fucking had enough of all of them. “I would never hurt any of you,” I screamed.

It startled them all enough that they stopped arguing.

My chest seized but I pushed back. “I love all of you, you bastards. I'd never hurt you. Not for anything. But since your first thought when something goes wrong is to accuse me, then I guess I love you all for nothing.”

My declaration impacted Derek and Samuel the most. They both stared at me, slack-jawed. Alex's nostrils flared and he moved a full step away from me. Accusations flared in his eyes, and I knew he didn't believe me. His next words proved it. “If you loved a single one of us, you would've said so before now. You would have said that instead of telling us all last night that this was temporary.”

He had a point. I hated admitting to more weakness, but it was time. “I was scared.” Even though he scoffed, I kept going. “What do I have to offer any of you? I couldn't imagine one of you loving me, much less all four of you.”

“Emma...” Derek rushed me before I could duck away and wrapped his arms around my shoulders.

“I need to leave.” I turned my head sideways and put my hands on his stomach to push him away.

He tensed. “Why?”

“Because me being here is tearing you all apart. I'm not worth the loss of years of friendship.” Tears spilled down my cheeks as I pulled out of Derek's embrace.

“You say you love us, but you're going to walk away?” Alex scoffed. “That's not love.”

“It is when you’re all frothing at the mouth to accuse me of something I would never, ever do.” I pointed at him directly. “I’m not going to argue about any of this. You all know how I feel. I love you enough to walk away before things get any worse.”

They didn’t even try to stop me from leaving the kitchen and going into Henry’s bedroom. I wished I could take a minute to remember last night, but the memories were too painful now. I changed out of Henry’s robe and back into my skirt and sweater from yesterday. My face was a splotchy mess but there was nothing I could do about that.

When I descended the stairs and grabbed my coat and boots from the hall closet, no one looked in my direction. I held the tears back until I made it out to my car. I rarely bothered to drive, but I’d brought the car out for the drive to Henry’s. Thank goodness I had, or I’d have to wait on an Uber to pick me up. I had to get out of there before I caved and ran back in and begged them to believe me.

A relationship built on begging for trust was doomed to fail.

EMMA

Angry at them and myself, I drove less than carefully back to Alex and Derek's apartment. The streets were a mess of slush and dirty snow. Betrayal stung hot in my chest. The weight of the misunderstanding lingered like a heavy cloud. Every mile between us stretched wider than I thought possible. Snow flooded my windshield, forcing me to focus on the weather instead of my inner pain. It was like the city heard my heartbreak and wanted to try and make me feel better.

It was the day before Christmas Eve for fuck's sake, and the best relationship of my life was royally screwed. I just wanted to curl up and watch it snow. But I couldn't stay at the apartment. Alex and Derek would come back here soon, and God only knew what would happen if I saw them again right now.

Arriving at the apartment, I fumbled with the keys. My hands shook so bad that I dropped the them. Nausea rose in another burst when I bent to retrieve them. What the hell was going on with my insides? I couldn't remember the last time I'd had stomach problems of any kind.

The metallic jingle of keys down the hallway snapped me upright. I didn't have time to worry about my churning gut right now. I jammed the key in the lock and wrenched it. The door creaked open, revealing the familiar space. I'd been happy here. I wouldn't feel that way if Alex caught me here. The space I'd once considered a refuge was now a cage snapping closed.

The living room felt colder than usual as I hurriedly gathered my few belongings. Each item I packed echoed with memories. One of Derek's hoodies lay across the foot of my bed. I'd snagged it one night when I couldn't get warm, and I found it tucked in the back of the closet. I brought it to my nose and sniffed deeply, then shoved it into my bag. He'd never miss it.

I wasn't the kind of girlfriend who stole from her ex, but I deserved that hoodie. After all the shit they just put me through. I pushed those thoughts aside.

The room bore witness to my hasty movements. It had been clean and neat when I first arrived, but now it looked like a hurricane had blown through. Anger fueled every move as I packed with a reckless fury in my determination to distance myself from all of them.

The anger wasn't just directed at them; it was a searing frustration at my inability to make them see the truth. I questioned my decisions, my choices, and the events that had led to this point. I eyed the sky through the foggy window and yanked the zippers on my duffel bag. The sound grated down my spine and locked my teeth together. Time to get out of here. Out of the apartment's charged atmosphere where nothing felt right and I kept glancing at the front door in the hopes that Derek would walk in.

I stood in the room—now devoid of my presence—and made myself check one last time for anything I'd forgotten. Angry tears blurred my vision as I cast a final glance around the room before I left, the door clicking shut behind me.

I drove straight to Grandma's house and walked my sorry ass up her sidewalk to knock on her kitchen door.

She opened it with a wide smile and scooped me into a hug. "Emma, honey. I'm so glad you came by." She leaned back and patted my cheeks, then spotted the duffel at my feet. "Uh-oh. That's not a good sign. And that frown..." She tsked and ushered me inside. "Come tell me what happened."

The homey comfort of her kitchen eased the hot coil in my stomach. I sank into a kitchen chair and kicked my duffel

under the table. “I never should have agreed to stay in their apartment.” I sniffed back another surge of tears and covered my face with my hands. “I made a mess of everything.”

“Oh, I doubt that.” She pattered around the kitchen. The sounds of her making tea were so familiar that I didn’t have to look to know exactly what she was doing.

I crossed my arms on the table and rested my forehead on them. “You’d be wrong this time, Grandma.” I chewed my lip. How much did I tell her? We’d shared everything so far. There wasn’t really a reason to hold back now.

I told her everything. From sex in Henry’s office to last night—minus the specific details, though she tried to pry them out of me—and all the way through today’s accusations. “Derek tried to defend me, but he was the only one. I couldn’t let it tear them apart.”

She stirred her tea, then pushed mine into my hands. I’d already down two cups while talking, but the rawness in my throat demanded another, with an extra dose of honey.

“People often jump to conclusions. They’re hurting and they lash out. It rarely has anything to do with the person being accused.” She rubbed the back of my hand. “But that doesn’t excuse Alex being a hotheaded bastard.”

I barked out a laugh. “No, it doesn’t.”

“So, what are you going to do about it?” Grandma didn’t give up easily. She’d taught me to fight for what I wanted. I wanted this, but were the risks worth it? It could all keep blowing up in my face.

My phone pinged and I checked it a little too eagerly for my own liking as a hopeful burst popped in my chest. The bubble worked up into my throat when I realized the notification was from my menstrual cycle app. It was asking if I wanted to record my menstrual cycle for the month, noting that I was five days later than normal. Every cell in my body locked down. The phone clattered to the table.

Grandma eyed it with raised eyebrows but didn’t ask any questions.

I backtracked through the dates. Three weeks. I'd had sex with Derek, then Henry, just over three weeks ago. I should have gotten my period last week. A knot formed in my throat, and I dragged my phone back into my shaking hands. I tried to type out the question in my search bar, but I kept messing it up. Finally, I looked across the table at Grandma. "I think I might be pregnant."

She blinked. "Okay. The drug store down the street is still open. Why don't you run down there and get a test? They'll close in a few hours and won't reopen until after Christmas."

No. It couldn't be possible. I wanted to fight the knowledge back, refuse to acknowledge the possibility. But I couldn't. I had to know. "I'll be back." I left in a flurry of footsteps and jogged the full block to the old grocery store on the corner. I used to come here with Grandma as a kid. The old man behind the counter used to give me peppermints every time I came in. He looked up and smiled at me. "Well, if it isn't Emma. You come to see your grandma for Christmas?"

I nodded and managed a smile. "I did, Bert. How's your wife and the grandkids? Have they come down yet?" Bert's kids had moved a hundred miles away years ago, but they always came back for the holidays.

"Oh, yeah. Got in three days ago. Looking forward to shutting down in a few hours." He patted the counter with a gnarled hand. "What can I get for you?"

The shop had little more than the basics, but the thing I needed was camping out behind the counter. Not that I'd be able to sneak out without Bert knowing what I needed since he didn't believe in self-checkout and every purchase went through under his keen eye.

"I need a pregnancy test." I kept my tone level and my expression placid.

Bert was a great old guy, but I had no interest in discussing this with him.

"Better make it a couple," I added when he pulled one off the rack. One might not be enough. I wanted the reassurance

of multiple negative tests to prove it to myself.

“You bet.” He took three off the hook and passed them to me. “Those be okay? Got a deal going on them this week. Buy two get one free.”

“Yeah, sure. Looks good.” I tried not to panic at the white boxes laying there accusing me with their little positive signs. I couldn’t be pregnant. My period had always been regular, but missing it this once didn’t mean I was pregnant. I wanted kids. But not when I didn’t know who the father was, or if that man even wanted anything to do with me. If I’d known this a few days ago, last night would have gone in a completely different direction. Maybe it would have ended in the same place. Maybe they wouldn’t care that I was pregnant.

Bert rang up the tests and put them in a plastic bag while I paid.

“Good luck.” He smiled and waved.

I did my best to return both on my way out the door with the bag clutched tight in my hand. I ran as fast as I could back to Grandma’s and burst into her kitchen.

She looked up from the sink, her eyes wide. “Lord, you scared the tea right outta me, girl.” She popped a dishtowel in my direction. “Go on. Might as well find out now. No sense in waiting.”

She almost seemed happy about this turn of events.

I was too panicked to know how I felt. I abandoned her in the kitchen, ripping open a box and reading the instructions on my way to the bathroom. I banged into the doorframe and staggered to a stop. I’d always abhorred her bathroom with its frilly pink toilet cover and matching pink shower curtain. Today the color took on a new meaning. Pink or blue? Plus or minus. What did I want? The idea of a baby secretly thrilled me, but I wanted the father figure to go with the bundle of joy. I wasn’t opposed to being a single mother. My mother never complained about my dad not being around, but I’d always felt like something was missing in my life without that male presence.

Not that I'd ever tell her that. Not when she'd given up so much to make my life the best that she could.

I sank onto the toilet and read the instructions twice before I followed them and set the test on the sink. I couldn't sit here and wait for the answer. If I did, I'd drive myself crazy waiting on that tiny symbol. Everything rested on the result of my ten-dollar test.

Grandma met me in the hallway. I sank into her comforting embrace and let the hot tears roll down my cheeks. She patted my back and soothed me the same way she'd done my whole life. Grandma and Mom were the strongest women I knew. They loved me unconditionally. I knew they'd never judge me if the test turned up positive. They'd be there to support me no matter what. They were not the ones I worried about. We stood in the hallway, with my school year pictures marching down the dark wood paneling, marking time until my phone beeped.

I lifted my head from Grandma's shoulder.

"Now then." She held my cheeks tight between her palms, squishing them together like she used to when I was a kid. "Wipe your face. Take a breath. Then we'll see what we see and go from there." Her head dipped in one quick nod. "Right?"

"Right." I grabbed a washrag from the hall closet and dampened it, then scrubbed it over my face.

Grandma stood at the bathroom door, giving me space to check the test myself while offering her quiet support.

I stared hard at myself in the mirror and took a deep, cleansing breath. I could do this. No matter what the test showed, I would not be ruined by falling in love with four men at the same time. My dark eyes shone back at me in the mirror, and I finally saw the conviction I needed in them. It bolstered my courage enough to pick up the test.

Positive.

"I'm pregnant," I spoke through numb lips. My heart kicked hard and joy swept through me. "Grandma, I'm pregnant."

She hugged me again and smiled. “Your mother is going to shit a brick.”

I burst out laughing. “That’s putting it mildly.” Mom was due to arrive at Grandma’s late tonight. We spoke to each other often on the phone, but her work as a night shift nurse kept us from seeing each other as much as we wanted.

“Are you going to tell them?” Grandma asked.

I turned the test around and around in my hands. “That’s the question I keep asking myself.”

They deserved to know. But did I want to put them all in that situation? Any of them could be the father. It was most likely Henry or Derek since I’d had sex with them first, but Samuel and Alex happened soon enough after that I had no clear contender for that positive sign on my pregnancy test.

Did I tell them or let it go?

DEREK

I wasn't above adding a little breaking and entering to my almost pristine record. I'd do anything for Emma, and since I was the only one who believed in her innocence, it was up to me to find the truth. And Christmas Eve was the perfect time to do it.

The firefighters had been called out for a fire about a half hour ago. I knew because I'd been waiting in the weight room for a chance to sneak past them. Once they all left, I crept up the stairs and jimmied the lock on Miles's door. I'd always like the director. He was a good guy and he'd do anything to help somebody. I understood that his hands were tied in this situation.

The door popped open with a gentle click, and I slipped inside the office. It didn't take long to crack open the filing cabinet and find the file with Henry's name on it. I flipped it open and found the complaint laying right on top. Perfect. I snapped a picture with my phone, then zoomed in to make sure I could read everything clearly. The name snagged something in my memory. I knew it somehow, but I didn't have time to look it up while standing in the director's office. I placed everything exactly as I'd found it and locked the door behind me on my way out.

I made myself wait until I'd returned to my car to search for the name. My social media came in clutch, bringing up the woman's picture, along with those of her friends. "Gotcha." I sent off a group text to Henry, Samuel, and Alex, demanding they meet at mine and Alex's apartment in a half hour.

Their responses came one after the other. Alex tried to argue that he was busy, but I lambasted him into agreeing. I didn't feel an ounce of guilt for it either. He'd been a dick to Emma with his accusations and refusal to believe her innocence. I had proof now, and I'd be damned before I let him keep moping around acting like he wasn't torn apart by what he'd done.

I'd tried already to get them to call Emma and apologize, but Henry had shut me down. He said that as long as the complaint was active, we all needed to stay away from Emma. I called bullshit on that too, and I was about to prove them all wrong. Emma was the woman we all needed. I wanted her in my life from here on out. I loved her and this was how I wanted to prove it to her and all of them.

Henry and Samuel were already in the apartment when I arrived, and Alex skulked in right behind me. I palmed my hips. "You're all a bunch of shitheads. You owe Emma an apology."

"Not this again." Alex turned back toward the door. "We've been over this."

I grabbed his arm and shoved my phone in his face. "This is the woman who filed the complaint against Henry."

Recognition hit Alex and he staggered back a step. "Wait, how do you know she did it?"

I flipped back to my pictures and showed him the photo of the complaint. Once he'd looked at it, I passed my phone to Henry, and then to Samuel. "It's a false report. From a friend of Alex's ex-girlfriend. Her name is Tammy Brooks. She's never even been to the fire station that I know of." I showed them her pictures from social media while Alex fumed and paced the kitchen.

"Fucking Danielle." He raked a hand through his hair. "She did this because I refused to give her money. I never thought she'd sink this low."

"Get ahold of Danielle and tell her she'd better get that report removed from Henry's record before I call the police." I

pointed at Alex. “Then you’re going to apologize to Emma.”

Henry sank onto the nearest barstool and dropped his head into his hands. “We’re all fucked. She’ll never forgive us. I never...”

“We know.” Samuel slapped Henry’s shoulder. “We were all assholes. Everyone but Derek.” He shoved his hand toward me. “Good job, kid. And I don’t even want to know how you got a copy of that report.”

“Trust me, you really don’t want to know.” But that wasn’t the part that mattered. “You all agree that Emma is innocent and we need to apologize our asses off until she forgives us and agrees to be in our lives again?”

A chorus of “yesses” rang out. About fucking time.

“How am I going to threaten Danielle when the record is supposed to be private?” Alex asked.

“I don’t think she’s going to think that far. She wanted to hurt you. She wants you to know that she did it, otherwise, what’s the point?” I wasn’t worried about Danielle or her friend. The important thing was getting this cleared up and getting Emma. “I’m not ready to give Emma up. She’s the best thing that’s happened to me. To any of us. I’m not letting you ruin this for us.”

I might be the newest guy on the team, but I knew a good thing when it landed in my lap. Emma was a great thing.

“Give me five minutes.” Alex locked his jaw and dialed, putting the phone on speaker.

Danielle’s sticky sweet voice filled the apartment. “Alex, baby. Merry Christmas. I was just thinking about you.”

“Yeah?” Alex dropped the phone onto the counter. “Were you thinking about how you screwed my captain over with that false claim of Tammy’s? Because that’s what I’m looking at right now.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. If Tammy has a problem with Henry, that’s between the two of them.”

Danielle's voice turned snarky and mean. "It's not like I'd give him the time of day."

"Is that so?" Alex wasn't backing down. Finally. The depression from the breakup had flipped, and he didn't care about this horrible woman anymore.

"That's right. If she wants to file a sexual harassment claim then that's her business. Everyone needs to know that Henry is fucking women in his office."

I glanced at Henry, whose face was set in stone. So, Danielle had caught him and Emma together... or she'd seen Emma come out of Henry's office with that sexy satisfied look and had known what it meant.

Alex gave a feral smile. "Thought you didn't know anything about it?"

"Well..." Danielle laughed. "Okay, fuck it. It was all just a big joke, okay. We wanted to piss you off."

"It worked. And now I'm going to return the favor. Admit it was a mistake and get the report removed, or I'll call the cops and tell them you're filing false claims. Pretty sure that carries a prison sentence." Alex's smile widened when Danielle didn't speak for several long seconds.

We were making shit up, but it was no worse than Danielle and Tammy. They'd put a man's reputation and career in jeopardy. It still might be too late to fix Henry's forced early retirement that was essentially firing him, but we'd gotten the truth.

"Fine." Danielle huffed. "We'll fix it after Christmas."

"Now, Danielle. Consider it your last Christmas present to me. After this, I never want to talk to you again." Alex hung up and then propped his elbows on the counter and leaned into them. "Call Emma. You're the only one she'll listen to. See if she's willing to meet you here."

Henry and Samuel added their agreements. "We fucked up. I'm not ready to give her up either." Samuel rubbed the back of his neck and elbowed Henry. "Once we do this, it's for good, right?"

“Yeah.” Henry’s eyes took on a gleam that I was beginning to recognize he only showed when we talked about Emma.

I dialed Emma’s number and waited while it rang and rang, then rolled over to voicemail. “Emma, it’s Derek. I need to see you. Can you come by the apartment today?” I ended the call and added my phone to the counter beside Alex’s. We sat and stared at each other, waiting for a phone call that might never come.

“What if she doesn’t call?” Alex tapped his fingers on the counter. “Anyone know where her grandmother lives?”

We all looked back and forth before finally admitting that we didn’t have a clue. Once we made up with Emma, we seriously had to sit down and talk about life and the future.

Time stretched endlessly as we sat in the tense stillness, our eyes flicking between the silent phones on the counter. The heavy weight of anticipation clung to all of us.

“Isn’t there a Christmas tree in the closet?” Alex asked. He didn’t wait for an answer but rushed over to the closet and started throwing shit all over the living room. He came out wearing a triumphant grin. “Found it.”

The cardboard box was falling apart, but it was definitely a Christmas tree.

“You thinking what I’m thinking?” He shook the box back and forth over his feet.

Henry slid off the stool and smiled. “Let’s decorate it. Let’s decorate the whole fucking place.”

Snow pelted the windows as we all hauled boxes of old Christmas decorations out of the closet and started cracking them open. Stuff I’d forgotten we had spilled out across the floor.

Each passing second heightened the anxiety, and the unanswered question lingered in the back of my mind. Would Emma respond?

I broke the uneasy quiet while piling ornaments on the couch where Emma and I first had sex. “She’ll call.”

“If she doesn’t, we’ll find a way to track her down.” Henry was determined. “You know, in a non-creepy kind of way.”

“We can’t rush her into a decision. If she needs time, we give it to her.” Samuel started cramming branches in the fake tree while Alex came behind him and fluffed them.

Alex nodded, his gaze fixed on the phones. “We can’t let her slip away. Not without a fight.” He cuffed me on the shoulder. “You were right to call us out. Sorry we gave you so much shit.”

“Eh. I’m used to it. New guy on the team always gets the shit end of the stick. I’m just glad to be right about something.” I took a box of Christmas plates and cups to the kitchen and started washing them. Shit. Everything I did reminded me of Emma.

As if on cue, my phone buzzed. We all stopped and stared. The name “Emma” flashed on the screen, and we all released heavy sighs.

“Thank God.” Alex motioned for me to hurry up.

I snatched up my phone and answered. “Emma, hey. You got my message?”

“I did. What do you want to talk to me about? I’m with my mom and Grandma.” Her voice was low and quiet, the tone full of tension.

I didn’t want to apologize over the phone, but I would if it meant she’d agree to meet us. “I need to see you. Please. It’s important.”

Alex cupped a hand around his ear and leaned toward me. “What’s she saying?” he whispered.

I waved him off and focused on Emma.

“I don’t know if I can today.” She stopped and I heard a hushed conversation in the background. Something about hot firefighters and a calendar. “Grandma, stop.” Emma’s light laughter buoyed my spirit. Sounded like her grandma was on our side and encouraging her to come see us. Or me. I hadn’t

told her we were all here, afraid she'd refuse to come after what happened last time.

“Okay. Derek. I'll come. It's the only way Grandma will give me my Christmas present.” She chuckled into the phone. “She wants me to ask if I can make her a new calendar using you as a model.”

“Tell her I'd be happy to agree as long as it means you'll come to the apartment.” I held my breath until I heard her sigh.

“Give me a few minutes to change clothes.” She hung up without a goodbye, but I didn't blame her for that either.

I waved my phone at the others. “She's on her way.”

A sense of relief washed over the room.

“Alright. Let's get to work.” Henry started barking orders and we all jumped into action.

I wanted this place looking amazing when Emma walked in. Maybe the shock of it would keep her here long enough for us to say what we needed to say.

It felt like hours passed before a quiet knock sounded on the door.

I jerked around to look over my shoulder, then pushed Alex out of my way. He was in the middle of hanging ornaments on the tree. We all were. “She doesn't know you're here. Maybe don't overwhelm her.” I jumped over the couch and yanked the door open before she could lose her nerve and walk away. I caught her in the middle of turning around. “Don't go. Please.” I stretched out my hand but didn't touch her. “Will you come inside?”

She stood in the hallway, her red skirt and Santa sweater were the cutest thing I'd ever seen her wear. She knotted her hands together but nodded and followed me. “Derek, there's some—” She stopped abruptly. “You decorated.”

“We all did.” I stood in the middle of the living room and spread my arms wide. “For you.” The Christmas tree twinkled with white lights that reflected in the mirror and created little

sparkles on the walls. We'd covered the branches with dozens of ornaments, and Henry had draped garland over the doorway and windows. Christmas music played from Samuel's phone, and a fire crackled in the gas fireplace on the far side of the room. A box of stuff for the mantle waited on the floor.

"For me?" she whispered and took another step. Her eyes glittered with what looked like tears.

Alex, Samuel, and Henry all moved into view and she froze again. Time stood still as I took her in. She looked beautiful, as always, but there was something different about today. Today, I knew that I wanted her to be mine forever. The five of us were meant to be together. We were perfect for each other. We balanced each other out in ways I never even understood that I needed.

"You're all here." Her face whitened and she smoothed a hand over her stomach. "That makes this easier." She blew out a breath. Her chin quivered but she stood ramrod straight. "I'm pregnant."

SAMUEL

Emma looked at us like she expected us to bolt away at a moment's notice. Not me. Hell, I crossed the room as fast as I fucking could and dropped to my knees in front of her. "I'm sorry, Emma. God, I'm so fucking sorry."

Tears welled in her gorgeous brown eyes and she shook from head to toe. Her mouth worked but no sounds came out except for tiny, gasping breaths that lifted her shoulders toward her ears.

"Please forgive us. We're all idiots and we overreacted. I should have stood by you, but I didn't. None of us did except Derek." I wrapped my arms around her waist and peered up into her soulful eyes. "Please, Emma. We're all sorry for being hotheaded morons. We let our tempers get the better of us."

"You thought I could do something that awful." Emma finally spoke and the threads of steel I'd seen in her wound tighter.

"We panicked." I tightened my hold on her waist and smoothed my hands up and down her spine. "It's no excuse for how we acted. But we're never going to do that again."

Henry's low, breathless exclamation sounded behind me. He moved closer and followed my lead, dropping to a knee at my left side. I'd never seen Henry do anything he'd consider submissive. Not in the twenty plus years I'd known him. But he did it for Emma, we all did, to prove ourselves.

"I'm sorry." He sounded as pained as we all felt. "I never should've blamed you. I knew better. I knew, deep in my heart,

that you'd never hurt me like that. Samuel's right, it's no excuse."

"We swear we'll take care of you, Emma," I added. "You and the baby. And any future children." My throat swelled as love for her and the baby inside her clamped down tight on my heart. I'd never thought I'd have kids. But with Emma, I *wanted* that baby with a fierce, desperate kind of love that I'd never felt before.

She swiped both hands over her cheeks, smearing her makeup as she dashed the tears away. "I don't even know whose baby it is." The words were soft, almost regretful.

"I don't care," I answered automatically. I kissed her belly and rubbed my cheek over her shirt. "We're all in this together, sweetheart. If you'll have us."

Alex was the last to go down to a knee. He took Emma's hand and stroked both thumbs over her wrist. "It's my fault things escalated. If I'd kept my head and took a second to think, I never would've accused you. I..." He pressed the back of her hand to his forehead. "I'm so damned sorry for everything I said to you. I'm with Samuel. We're in this together, if you'll have us."

"You don't care that I don't know who knocked me up?" She sounded incredulous.

We all stood and wrapped her into a group hug that pressed all our bodies together.

Derek spoke for all of us. "We don't care. All that matters is that you forgive us. That you're safe and happy."

"Well shit." She was full-on jagged crying now with great, heaving sobs that wracked her entire body.

We all comforted her, smoothing her hair back and letting her get all the emotions out. When she settled her cheek against my chest and wrapped her arms around my waist, my heart soared.

"I can't believe you're all okay with this." She sniffled one last time and pulled away. "I mean, it's crazy that any of you

would even have sex with me, much less that all four of you would want me to stick around.”

“Forever.” I reiterated my feelings with a kiss to the top of her head. When she lifted her face toward me, I claimed her lips. She tasted salty and sweet at the same time. I framed her face with my hands and rubbed my thumbs over her cheeks. “I need you forever. I’ve never found a woman like you before. And now that you’re here, I never want to give you up.”

The others came in with a chorus of “*same here*” and “*me too*” that had Emma sighing and leaning into my hands. She patted my hands where they rested on her cheeks and then gripped Henry’s arm, pulling him in closer.

Our bodies pressed in closer, and I couldn’t help the surge of blood going to my dick when her hip brushed over my crotch.

“I love the decorations.” She hugged Alex and Derek, kissing each of them on the cheek.

“Anything for you,” Alex said. His smile spoke volumes for his emotions. Alex didn’t give his heart easily, but when he did, he was all in. It was what made Emma’s perceived betrayal so hard on him.

Emma turned back to me, and her smile burned bright enough to light up the whole room. Her grin turned mischievous as she rubbed her hips over my erection. “You know what would make this day perfect?” She reached back and grabbed Henry by the front of his shirt.

None of us needed words to know what she wanted. I tipped her face up and brushed my lips over hers, then trailed them down her cheek, along her neck, and to her shoulder.

Henry ran his hands beneath her sweater, tugging it up over her shoulders. I lifted my head long enough for him to remove the garment and toss it aside. Her bra came off next, and I buried my head in her glorious tits.

“Samuel.” She sighed my name and threaded her fingers through my hair.

I lost track of everything except Emma. The feel of her skin against mine and the soft, breathy sounds she made caused my dick to swell and tighten. I needed to be inside her, but I wanted to make this last as long as possible. Dropping back to my knees, I eased my hands over her hips, pulling her skirt and panties down in one smooth motion.

“Bedroom.” Emma moaned and grabbed my hair. “Please take me to the bedroom.”

I didn’t hesitate to sweep her into my arms and carry her to the bedroom where I’d first had sex with her, along with Alex. We all filed into the room, our need filling it with bursts of tension and sexual desire. I spread Emma out on the bed and parted her thighs. Henry, Alex, and Derek made a circle around her on the bed.

Henry kissed her while Alex and Derek each took a breast and put their mouths to work. Fuck she was hot as hell. Her body became our feasting table, and I shoved my face between her legs, licking her from ass to clit.

She bucked and groaned into Henry’s mouth. Both hands reached out, and she gripped Alex and Derek by the shoulders, anchoring herself as I worked her over.

Her sex throbbed on my tongue, the sweet tang of her juices flowing as I sucked and teased. When I eased a finger inside her, she came off the bed, immediately tightening and convulsing.

“Fuck me, Samuel.” She broke away from Henry’s mouth long enough to speak. “Please. Oh fuck. I need your dick inside me or I’m going to lose my mind.”

I latched onto her clit and sucked while thrusting another finger inside and pulsing it hard and fast. Just a little longer. I pushed her to the brink, driving her within seconds of an orgasm before I withdrew and rolled off the bed.

“Not me.” I took a seat in one of the chairs against the wall. “Henry?”

Henry rubbed a hand over his chin. “We’ll keep things a little simpler today. But I think Alex should get to fuck her

first.”

Alex lifted his head from Emma’s chest and looked from Henry to Emma. “Do you want me to fuck you, Emma?”

“Yes.” She lifted her hips in a seeking thrust. “Please.”

“I’m going to enjoy this.” It was one of the great things about our situation. I loved seeing the others please Emma. There was no jealousy involved when we teamed up like this. I’d get my turn with her, but watching while I waited would only make it that much better.

She raised her head and watched me remove my shirt and jeans, freeing my painfully thick erection.

A little keening moan sounded in the back of her throat. “Henry, can I suck your dick while Alex fucks me?” Her soft voice made the request all the more sexy.

“Yes.” Henry scooted up to the top of the bed and unbuttoned his pants.

Emma rolled onto her hands and knees and crawled up after him. The sight of her white ass in the air drove me wild. My cock pulsed and my balls tightened so hard I could barely breathe.

Alex moved into position behind Emma, and Derek moved to the opposite side of the bed and dropped into a chair where he could watch. We grabbed our dicks and stroked them, our eyes on Emma as she took Henry’s dick deep into her throat. She bobbed her head over him, sucking hard enough to fill the room with the sound of Henry’s hard inhale.

“That’s good, baby.” Henry pulled her hair into his hands and twisted it into a knot on the back of her head so that we had a good view. “Show them what they’re missing.” He leaned his head back against the wall and used the pressure of his hand in her hair to drive her deeper over his cock.

Alex held his cock in one hand and used the other to stroke Emma’s clit. “You’re so fucking beautiful,” he crooned. “We’re all going to make you come. Right, Henry?”

“That’s right.” Henry dropped his chin to his chest and pushed deeper into Emma’s mouth. “We’re going to fuck you, one at a time, until you’ve come on all our dicks. Then we’ll team up and see how many dicks you can hold in that beautiful body. Alex has a dream of stuffing all our dicks inside you.” He buried his dick in her throat. “Do you want that, baby?”

She nodded around his cock and sucked harder.

“Give her your cock, Alex. Make it good for her.” Henry’s order came out with that same sharpness we’d all come to trust over the years.

Alex did as ordered, giving Emma his whole shaft with one savage thrust that made her body seize and shake. She was already close, and Alex’s hard and fast rhythm drove her right up and over the edge in a matter of minutes. Alex arched his back and thrust harder as Emma’s legs trembled, and she gasped and sucked Henry like her life depended on it.

Henry withdrew his cock to let her scream. “Good. That’s what we want to hear. Keep going, Emma. You’re not going to get any rest for a while.”

“I don’t want to rest.” Emma pulled herself off Alex’s dick and hopped off the bed to straddle Derek. “I want to feel every dick inside me.” She eased her way onto Derek and rode him hard enough to make her tits bounce against her chest. “I want you all to fuck me. Give me everything.”

“We will,” Derek promised. His face was twisted in a grimace as he struggled to hold on. None of us were ready for this to end.

I could live in this room, in the bed with Emma, my cock buried in any one of her holes. She made life exciting and there was nothing I wouldn’t give her to make this life acceptable to her. We’d never be civilized or accepted by societal standards, but as long as we were all happy, who the fuck cared?

Emma’s head thrashed side to side. “God. You all feel so fucking *good*. I never want to stop.”

“We’re nowhere near done, baby.” Henry’s eyes glittered as he watched Emma ride her way to another orgasm. She was absolutely fucking splendid. “Get back in the bed and blow me while Samuel takes his turn.”

She stood, leaving Derek’s dick hard and wet. He wrapped both hands around his bobbing cock and stroked it while Emma made her way back onto the bed. Henry’s dick waited for her, and she took him into her mouth slowly, enjoying every second of torture.

I climbed onto the bed behind Emma and grabbed her ass with both hands. She sucked in a breath and rocked back against my cock as she lifted her head from Henry’s dick.

He stroked himself while she caught her breath, but Emma wasn’t willing to stay away from him for long. She lowered her head and began licking and nibbling along his shaft before wrapping her lips over him and swallowing him so deep that Henry’s toes curled.

I chose that moment to slide my cock between her folds and enter her sweet pussy. The move pushed her even further over Henry’s shaft. She buried her head in his crotch and worked her ass up and down over my erection when I didn’t move fast enough to suit her.

“Slow down, baby.” Henry gripped her head with both hands, holding her still. “Take what we give you and let us please you.” He lifted her head to the tip of his cock, then rocked his hips, sliding in and out of her mouth.

I mimicked his actions from behind Emma, giving her my entire length with each stroke. Skin slapped skin in that beautiful sound that came with great sex. The back of my neck tingled and my balls tightened even further. Her tight cunt begged me to come and spill my seed inside her over and over again. She already had a baby growing in her despite being on birth control. We’d never held back before, and there was no need to start now.

Henry and I set a slow pace that built to a crescendo and teased Emma into a gasping orgasm. Her body spasmed and her pussy clenched in a rolling wave that locked me in place.

She popped her head off Henry's dick and arched her back, driving into me in hard thrusts that almost made me come despite my tight hold and desperate desire to keep this going.

I held her tight and bowed my back over hers to kiss between her shoulder blades. "Marry me, Emma."

EMMA

What? Surely, I'd heard Samuel wrong. His cock swelled inside me, and I tried to think past the mind-shattering orgasms they'd already given me. The hopes of more had me pulsating and ready to say and do anything, but not this. Not that I didn't want to marry Samuel, but the timing wasn't exactly ideal.

I rolled my hips and tightened my core, dragging out a curse from him that whispered over the shell of my ear.

"I'm ruined for anyone but you, Emma. Marry me." He kissed between my shoulders again.

I looked up into Henry's eyes and saw a swell of love and affection take over his features. "Ask me again later. Not when we're hyped up on sex, Samuel." I groaned as he dragged his cock out of me and thrust it back in, pounding my pussy with every bump and ridge.

Henry took my face in his hands and held me at eye level. "You're always going to be crazed with sex when we're around. I'm going to make sure of that."

God, I hoped so. I'd gotten hooked on them in the three weeks we'd been together. Thinking I'd lost them was the worst moment of my life. And now we were all together again. Not nearly as together as I wanted.

Henry saw the change come over me and held up a hand for Samuel to stop. Samuel drove into me, buried to the hilt in a move that I felt all the way to my toes.

“You’re not ready yet, but you’re close.” Henry slid away from me. “Let her ride you, Samuel. Get her going again, and when she’s ready, I’ll take her ass.”

Holy fuck. I was about to get fully fucked out by all four of my firemen at the same time. The image in my mind seemed impossible, but if anyone could figure out a way to pull it off, it was these four.

Samuel withdrew and took Henry’s place on the bed. He speared me with a look that set my pussy on fire for him. “We’re not done talking about marriage.” He made the words sound like a promise, and I’d never felt more wanted in my whole life than when the others gave me the same look of adoration and love.

I crawled into Samuel’s lap and wrapped both hands around his cock. It was thicker than ever, and my simple touch made the tendons stand out in his neck. I scooted down and blew lightly over the head, then darted out my tongue and flicked it over the tip. I tasted myself on the seam and licked my way around the bulbous head before pulling him into my mouth.

I expected Henry to admonish me for not following orders, but when I glanced to the side, he stood there watching and wearing a wide smile. I’d come so many times already that I should be satisfied, but knowing what else they could do, I wasn’t ready to stop anytime soon. I wanted to drain every last drop of pleasure from the next few hours. I released Samuel’s dick long enough to arch an eyebrow at Henry. “I’m sorry, sir. He tastes so good, I can’t help myself.”

“Damn it.” Henry scraped his hands through his hair and looked over my head at Derek. “I don’t have any of my shit here.”

But he needed the release of taking control. I understood that about him now. Sex was different for Henry. He didn’t always need to go full bondage, ass-smacking sex, but right now he needed more than was available to him by simply ordering us all around.

Derek grinned and stood. “You’re in luck. My Christmas present to myself arrived a few days ago. I ordered it before... well, before the shit hit the fan.” He rushed out, his bare ass tight.

Henry moved to the edge of the bed and leaned over me. He grabbed my ass and squeezed, then pressed his thumb over my hole. “Things are about to escalate. Are you ready?”

“Always.” I bent down over Samuel and sucked him like a damned lollipop. My ass went into the air and Henry slapped it. God, it felt so good.

Derek came back carrying a black case. He popped the lock and opened it toward Henry.

“Fuck yes.” Henry slapped Derek on the shoulder and pulled out a pair of handcuffs. “Emma, get that pussy on Samuel’s dick and put your hands behind your back.”

I drew Samuel as deep as I could, prolonging the moment and inciting Henry’s wrath. I knew him now, knew what to expect from my *disobedience*. He cracked his palm over my ass, then slid his hand across the stinging flesh. When I still didn’t lift my head from Samuel’s rigid cock Henry slapped my pussy and pinched my clit.

“You know what happens when you disobey?” He grabbed my hair in a strong but gentle grip and pulled. I sucked on Samuel and the tension caused his dick to pop as it came out of my mouth.

“I know, sir.” I showed him my willingness to let him take control and watched the change come over him.

He released my hair and pulled my arms over my head, then snapped the handcuffs into place. “Samuel, get off the bed. Emma’s being a bad girl. That means she doesn’t get our cocks until I say so.” He pushed me onto my back and tied my hands to the foot of the bed. “Every time you disobey, we make you wait longer.”

“What does she get instead?” Samuel asked as he raised up onto his knees. “Fucking shit. No way?” Derek pulled out a huge dildo. “Derek, you dog. I’m impressed.”

“It’s remote-controlled.” Derek held out a slim controller. “It’s charged up and ready to go. I’d planned on using it on Emma, and there’s no better time than now.”

“This first.” Henry handed Alex a glass anal plug. “Take care of that for me, Alex.”

Alex rolled me onto my side and parted my cheeks. The anal plug pressed into my ass, and I couldn’t stop a moan of pleasure as it went into place. It was long enough that it reminded me of a cock. I clenched around it, enjoying the pleasure it created as my muscles tightened.

“It feels good.” I rolled back toward them. The four of them stood there, naked and proud, their dicks all impossibly hard. But instead of getting off as fast as they could, they prolonged the moment and spent time and attention ensuring I came over and over again. They always put me first. I’d never find anything this special again. “I love you.”

Derek sat beside me and brought one of my legs up, bending it at the knee. Alex did the same thing on the other side. I was spread wide for them, open and waiting for whatever Henry decided to give me.

“I fucking love all of you.” I met their eyes.

“We love you too.” Henry knelt between my legs and guided the dildo into place. Unlike a real cock, the dildo had thick, circular ridges that wrapped around the whole thing. Rings of pearls circled the inside, and when Samuel pressed a button, the pearls pulsed up and down, then made a circle around the inside. “If you can take this, Emma, then we can get two of our cocks in that amazing cunt of yours. But you have to take this first. Can you do that?”

“Yes.” I bit my lip as the first ridge went in. It stretched me more than I thought possible.

Samuel hit another button and the dildo undulated inside of me, pulsing in and out while the pearls spun around.

Derek and Alex returned their attention to my tits, sucking and teasing the nipples while they held my legs for Henry.

“You’re doing great.” Henry kept steadily pushing the dildo inside.

Samuel changed the direction of the beads, and I almost came at the sudden change. But then he reached down and wiggled the anal plug while Henry worked the next few inches inside.

“Oh God. Oh God. Oh God.” I fell apart in a shaking mess as wave after wave of euphoria washed over me. “I need you, Henry. Please. Oh God please give me your dicks.”

“Not yet.” Henry rose onto his knees and fully seated the dildo into place. “Ride the wave, baby. It’s coming hard and fast. He settled his weight between my legs, using his hips to press the dildo in impossibly far. The move shifted the anal plug again and when Samuel started manipulating buttons my entire body turned into a mass of nerves.

I came hard, screaming and thrusting my hips onto Henry’s as I sought that blessed release. As soon as it crested, Henry unhooked the handcuffs and removed the dildo and anal plug at the same time. The sudden loss of it left me reeling but Henry and Samuel guided me quickly into position over Derek and Alex, who lay in a contorted pile with their cocks held together.

I could barely see through the still cresting waves of my orgasm, but as soon as my pussy touched their cocks, I rammed onto them as fast as I could.

The relief of being filled with their cocks made me cry out again. “That’s what I need. I need all of you. It’s always been all of you.”

Henry bent me forward and eased his cock into my ass. I was filled almost to the brim. I had one more to go. My pussy and ass were stuffed full. Every breath brought me closer to the biggest orgasm I’d ever felt. My scalp tingled, all my nerves shivering and aching as I searched for that last release.

Samuel’s cock appeared next to my mouth, and I took it in with a gasping sigh of relief. This was what I needed. I had all

of them inside me. All of them working together to bring us all to the peak of absolute bliss.

Derek and Alex flexed their hips, pushing me back into Henry. His cock hit the ring of muscles in my ass and stars exploded behind my eyes. I swallowed Samuel's cock as far as I could, my tongue and jaw covering every inch of him.

I was coming in a rush that nothing could stop. I wanted them to come with me. The five of us together, the way it was always meant to be. Henry's long dick worked my ass in rhythm with Alex and Derek. The stretch and pull drove me wild, and I didn't know how long I could hold on.

Henry rubbed his hands up my back and over my shoulders. He fanned my hair out and then bunched it together as he guided me further over Samuel's cock. "Almost there, baby. Come on. Take a little more. Samuel is so close. You should see the look on his face. We're all coming for you."

"It's going to be fucking amazing." Derek cupped my breasts and rolled a nipple between his thumb and forefinger.

Alex fingered my clit. "You're squeezing us so tight, Emma. You're so damned good with us. I can barely move and it's fucking marvelous. Keep going. One more minute."

I wasn't going to last another minute, not with all of them talking dirty and filling me up with their fantastic cocks. I couldn't say a word with Samuel's dick down my throat, but I didn't need to. My body spoke for me. My legs trembled, my inner thighs giving me away as the waves of my orgasm began to roll through me. I held on as long as I could, but they were too much. It all felt too good. The shot of sparking energy that started at the back of my neck spread throughout my entire body. My pussy tightened and released in a wave that clamped me onto all three dicks. They didn't let me stop moving. Between all their hands and thrusting hips, they drove me up and down over and over again.

"I'm going to come in your mouth, Emma. You're so good at blowing me, sweetheart. I can't stop." Samuel worked his cock a little deeper, going past my gag reflex.

I hummed in the back of my throat to help ease the need to gag and his hot cum shot deep into my mouth. I worked to swallow every last drop, and his shuddering pushed me over into a full-blown mind-altering orgasm that wrung my entire body into a deep shudder.

Alex and Derek came together. They threw their heads back and fucked me with wild thrusts that had Henry cursing a blue streak. His cock thickened in my ass, and he strained forward with one last hard thrust before I felt his cum spiraling out in waves.

We collapsed onto each other in a heap of arms and legs and heavy breathing.

“Best. Christmas. Ever.” I chuckled and crossed my arms over Alex’s chest. His smile matched mine and he twirled a strand of hair around his finger. “This time, I’m not letting you get away.”

“And I’m never letting you go.” He promised me with a kiss that swept away any lingering doubts. He didn’t seem to care that I’d just finished blowing his best friend. He kissed with a desperation that left me breathless and full of love for all of them.

I wasn’t sure what would happen next, but I knew that it included me and these four firemen. I’d move heaven and earth to be their happily ever after. They were already mine. If only we could figure out what to do about Henry’s job.

“Who wants to explain what changed your minds about me?” I turned my head to the side to look at Derek, who looked far too proud of himself.

“I’ll explain everything as soon as you answer a question for me.” He trailed his fingers up and down my ribs, the touch almost but not quite tickling.

“What?” I yawned sleepily. I hadn’t gotten much rest the night before after finding out about the pregnancy and wondering whether I should tell them. I couldn’t believe how well they’d accepted the pregnancy. They truly were okay with sharing me. Samuel’s earlier words trickled across the back of

my mind. He'd said any future kids, along with this one. He wanted to take care of me. They all did.

Derek propped onto one elbow. "Just what kind of calendar does your grandma want from me?"

I laughed and buried my head into Alex's chest. "Preferably a naked one, but I don't think I can handle walking into Grandma's kitchen and seeing you plastered on her kitchen wall."

"I don't know." He laughed and his head lolled backward.

"The only naked calendar we're making is one for Emma to masturbate to." Samuel tipped my chin up. "Not that you're going to need one when we're all available to you anytime you want us."

"That brings up a good point." I looked past Samuel to Henry laying behind me, his cock still in my ass like he was waiting for another round. "What about your job?"

HENRY

I'd never had a Christmas like this before. I settled deeper into the middle of the couch and wrapped my arm around Emma's shoulders. Sunlight danced through the front windows and caught the lighter brown highlights in her hair where they draped over my arm and around the side of her face.

We'd come back to my house last night after our sex session. My place was bigger and gave us all more room. Plus my kit was here, and I planned on putting it to good use in a little while. "Are you sure your mom and grandma are okay with you staying here today?" I couldn't stop touching her. It seemed unreal that she'd picked us. She thought she was the lucky one for having all of us, but we were the lucky ones. Most women wouldn't even consider getting into a relationship with four men.

Emma came to us with open arms and never hesitated.

She snuggled up to my side and palmed my cock. "They understand. I'll see them later tonight." Without stopping to take a breath, she lowered my jogging pants and took me into her mouth.

"You're going to ruin me, baby." I'd told her that before, and I meant it. She'd ruined me for anyone else. Ever. I loved her so damned much I couldn't breathe at the thought of having to give her up.

She tongued my cock, licking the underside and then grinning up at me. "That's the plan."

Samuel turned around from looping garland on the Christmas tree we'd hauled out of the attic late last night. We'd stayed up all night decorating until we collapsed in bed. Emma had come down to the living room first thing this morning and gotten back to work. But now it seemed like she needed a little playtime.

I stretched out to give her better access and gripped her ass and squeezed. "Why don't you take off that robe and climb in my lap?"

"What will you give me if I do?" Her smile widened and she brought her lips back and forth over the head of my cock, then put her lips over the head and sucked.

Fuck, I loved this woman. "I'll give you your Christmas present."

Samuel snorted behind me. "Pretty sure coming in her pretty pussy isn't a Christmas present."

"Not talking about that." I worked my fingers through her hair and couldn't help but let her take me deep and slow into her mouth until I hit her gag reflex, then pushed past as she hummed. "Damn I love it when you do that. You're an angel and I'm a devil. I don't deserve you." My chest pinched tight as I revealed all that with the guys listening in. It was true for all of us, but more so for me. I was the one who reveled in punishment and marking her with my hands. It wasn't often that what most considered *normal* sex worked for me, but having the guys in the room, watching her work my cock, helped give me a sense of naughtiness that pushed me closer to the edge.

Emma popped straight up on the couch and flung my robe off her shoulders. The move bared her breasts, and she settled in my lap with my cock in her hands. She steered the head between her legs and rubbed it back and forth over her clit. "It's not about who deserves what. We love each other." She eased me inside and rolled her hips forward. "And I need you to fuck me, Henry. That's all the Christmas present I need."

"So, you don't want to move in with me?" I planted my feet on the floor and surged upward, bottoming out inside her

with a suddenness that made us both gasp. “With all of us?”

Her mouth fell open, and her eyes were half glazed with lust. “Why do you all keep asking me questions like that when you have a dick in me. Don’t you know how hard it is to think when we’re fucking?”

I stopped moving and held her hostage with my hands on her hips. She ground her teeth and her mouth twisted into a frown.

“Well,” she huffed. “I guess I deserved that.”

“You never answered Samuel either. I don’t know the laws, but if you’re allowed to marry all of us, then that’s what we want. If not, marry Samuel. We can all live here together and do this every single day.”

“And the baby?” She wiggled on my lap the tiniest bit and her walls fluttered around my cock.

I locked down the need to take her upstairs and tie her down again. Later. We had all the time in the world. No need to rush. “Our baby will be well taken care of. And if you want to have more, they’ll all be given the best life possible.”

“What about your job?” She continued to press this particular issue. “You shouldn’t be held accountable for some bitch’s stupid prank.”

“There’s nothing any of us can do about that.” I rolled my hips, giving her a taste of my cock. We should have all been out delivering Christmas gifts today. The others would go out later and take care of it, but not me. That hurt the worst. I loved seeing kids light up when we showed up with their gifts after thinking they were not getting anything for Christmas. Maybe I could find another job that would allow me to do something similar, but I doubted it.

Even if Danielle’s friend decided to retract the complaint, there was no guarantee that I’d be reinstated at work. Miles wasn’t required to give me the job back, even if the claim was false, it was still a mark on my record. I knew Miles. His thought process was that something happened to cause the

complaint to be lodged in the first place. Even if Tammy claimed it was a joke, Miles might refuse to let me return.

The thought of never fighting another fire devastated me. But I'd survive.

Emma bit her lip and kissed me. Her tongue swept over mine and she lifted her hips as far as my hands would allow.

"We could all refuse to come back to work unless you're given your job back." Derek hung an ornament on the tree, then came over to sit on the arm of the couch. He brought his feet up onto the cushion and ran his toes along Emma's bare thigh.

"No." I shook my head at him. "Don't any of you even think about it." Releasing the pressure on Emma's hips, I slid my hands up her ribs and locked them behind her back.

My phone rang from the kitchen counter. I growled into Emma's neck and breathed into her ear until she shivered.

"I'll get it." Alex strolled past the couch, his erection leading the way. "Then I'm coming back for a bit of action."

"Let's go upstairs." Emma rocked her hips. "I need to come so hard I see stars. You've ruined me for anything else, Henry."

"Henry," Alex hissed my name from the kitchen.

I lifted my head from Emma and raised both eyebrows. "What?"

He waved the phone at me. "It's the director."

"Shit." I held out my hand while putting a finger over Emma's lips. "Not a sound."

With a smirk, she climbed off my lap and dropped to her knees between my legs. "Let's see how you like it."

"You're going to pay for that," I said as she deepthroated my cock and hummed. "I'm so going to make you pay for this."

"Damn right." Samuel already had his cock out and was waiting for Emma to take him next.

I swiped to answer the still-ringing phone. “Henry here.” Emma nipped the base of my cock with her teeth and I almost yelped.

“Henry, it’s Miles.” He cleared his throat. “Listen, I know it’s Christmas, but I thought you’d want this news right away.”

I barely heard him through the blood rushing from my head to my dick. Emma cradled my balls in her hand and lapped at my cock in long strokes that took her from base to tip. She licked and sucked until I was forced to pinch my leg to keep from groaning into Miles’s ear. “What news?” My voice sounded strained, but I hoped he’d attribute that to my recent firing.

“Well.” He paused again and I heard the sound of scraping through the phone. “It seems the complaint against you was false. The person who filed it has withdrawn the claim.”

“Did they give a reason why they filed it? Or why they withdrew it?” I already knew the answer, but Miles didn’t know that. So I forced myself to ask all the questions I’d normally ask even as Emma blew me with a joyful abandon that made my need soar higher.

“No reasons given. We didn’t ask for one as it’s not our place. But since it’s Christmas, and I know you always look forward to the toy deliveries, I wanted you to know that you’re welcome to come back to work today.”

“Really?” Hope bloomed in my chest, and the only thing keeping me from leaping to my feet was Emma’s tight hold on my cock. Her throat worked and she angled her head to the side to lick the sensitive ridge and the vein that snaked up the side. “That’s great. Thank you, sir.”

Emma snorted and raised her head. “That’s my line,” she whispered too low for Miles to hear.

I rolled my eyes and gripped the back of her head to shove her back into place. She laughed and willingly took me into her mouth again.

Derek sat on the floor behind her and lifted her into his lap. I gave him an encouraging look as he eased his dick into her,

giving her a little action to help us all along.

“Does that mean you’ll come back to work today?” Miles asked.

My head fell back against the couch when Emma double-fisted my cock and sucked harder than ever before.

“Yes. We’ll all be there.” I ground the words out. My control started to unravel. I’d never had anyone do what Emma did to me. The love I felt for her filled me to bursting, and it wasn’t because I needed to come so bad my balls ached.

Miles sighed. “Great. We’ll see you in a few hours.”

I ended the call with a grunt. “Upstairs. Now.”

Emma released me with a smile and leaned back into Derek. “Oh, but I’m having so much fun down here.” She bounced her tits and leaned forward onto her elbows.

“I’m not going anywhere until she answers us.” Alex stood blocking the stairs with his arms crossed.

Derek pushed Emma onto her knees and followed her up. “What was the question?”

Emma stretched like a cat and purred. “Yes. I’ll marry Samuel. All of you, if I can. And I’ll move into Henry’s house. But only if you all agree to meet my grandmother before she goes ballistic.”

As soon as she finished speaking, Derek pulled out of her and picked her up. He dropped her over his shoulder and slapped her ass. “We’d love to meet your grandmother. But first, we have something else to take care of.”

I sat on the couch for a long minute after they all raced upstairs. My living room was a total mess. Needles littered the floor from the fake Christmas tree. Ornaments lay scattered on every available surface. My robe was draped over the couch cushion beside me.

And I wouldn’t change a thing. I had more than I’d ever thought I deserved.

“Merry Christmas.” I stood and toasted the half-decorated Christmas tree. Three weeks had never changed my life so much. I’d gone from being a lonely fire chief to a man so deeply in love he’d asked three men and a woman to move in with him. “No regrets.”

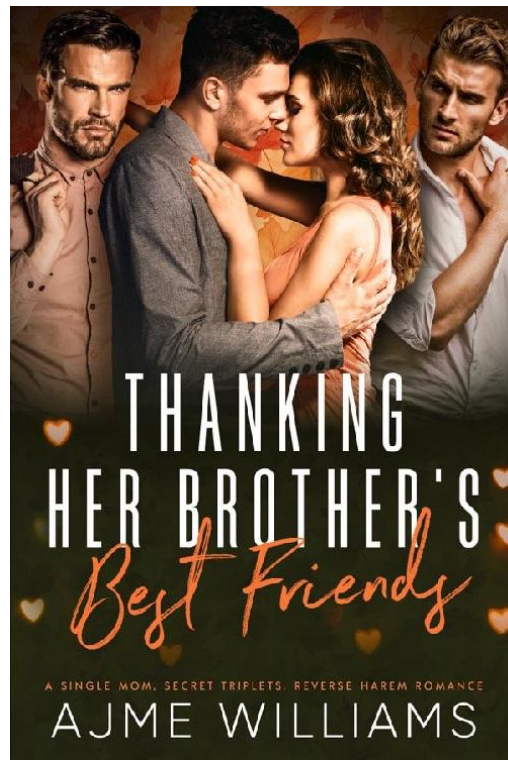
“Henry, you coming?” Emma called down to me from upstairs. She reappeared halfway down the steps wearing a leather collar and leather cuffs around her wrists and ankles. “Come play with me before you go to work, sir.”

God bless this woman. How had I ever gotten so lucky? I grinned and prowled toward her. “Oh, baby. You bet I’m coming. But only after you do. Again. And again. And again.” I hooked my finger in the collar’s chain loop and pulled her in for a kiss. “You’ve got four firemen for Christmas, baby.”

“Best Christmas ever.” She stretched her arms around me and nuzzled the side of my neck. “I’m never letting any of you get away. I might be wearing the chains, but you’re all hooked on me.”

In mood for another holiday reverse harem romance? Check out [**Thanking Her Brother’s Best Friends**](#) here.

THANKING HER BROTHER'S BEST FRIENDS (PREVIEW)



DESCRIPTION

Being a national sensation failed to prepare me for a life of scandal that comes with sleeping with three men at the same time.

I have a son to consider. What was I thinking?

They are just not any men. *They are my brother's best friends!*

Aiden is the hottest introvert I've ever met. He makes me want to cuddle next to him on the couch all night long.

Dominique's strength feels like protection. His arms touch my curves and bring out the joy that I haven't felt in years.

And **Niall's** charisma and love for music has me dancing like a teenager.

My over-protective brother would lose his mind... along with the rest of the country.

My toxic ex has made it impossible for me to consider love, let alone love with three men.

But Aiden, Don, and Niall make me want to smash my past and risk my future.

Especially now that I have three more babies to be grateful for this Thanksgiving.

And with my growing belly, this secret is just impossible to hide.

PROLOGUE

Selene

I needed a sign.

My eyes closed as I hummed along to Coldplay's *Let Somebody Go*.

I wondered how the lyricist had felt when he'd written that line—and whether love always had to be equal to the pain.

Today, on the most successful streak of my career, all I could think about was going home and hoping my marriage would not fall to ruins. That my son would not lose his father.

It would be the biggest failure of my life.

Which was perplexing because, on the face of it, things had never been better. Take today, for example. I'd had a very, very successful day of meetings.

My patisserie posse was over the moon because we'd won the *BakeMaster* accolade for being the best pastry shop in all of Boston for three years running.

The accolade was the most prestigious one in the entire country in my profession. The irony, however, was not lost on me. I was no Master, but Mistress probably didn't do the role justice.

It should have, but these were the little ways in which the world kept telling me that if you were born a woman, you learned to make do with what you could.

Not that I'd listened to what society had tried to teach me. My whole life was the product of an extended rebellion.

I stared at my phone screen as the latest updates from *CBS News Boston* unfolded.

We'd come a long way from the little shithole I grew up in to today, where Ayanna Pressley had catapulted to an influential congresswoman serving Massachusetts's seventh congressional district. It wouldn't be as important if she were another whitewashed figure.

But no, Pressley was a woman of color who came from a complex background. Her mother had worked multiple jobs to support the family.

Her father struggled with addiction and spent most of Pressley's childhood incarcerated.

He did redeem himself with those degrees and that professor role he got, but the marriage ended in divorce anyway.

"Times sure have changed, haven't they?" I said to no one in particular. Chloe, sitting next to me in the Fortuner, grinned.

"You could say so. I guess it doesn't apply to the scars we still carry around."

Chloe gave me a knowing pat on the shoulder. "Don't do that to yourself. Don't go back there. Look where you're at right now."

I wanted to. I let my gaze hover over the cars moving through the busy roads, their caterwauling a strange contrast to the whimsical tunes being belted out by street musicians.

Pedestrians strolled the sidewalk, their eyes lit and mouths open in animated conversation. I liked to wonder what they were talking about.

A little girl and her mother walked hand-in-hand. The girl was pointing at a candy shop, eagerness in her eyes. On the other hand, the mother kept looking at her watch and then back at her child.

Hers was an expression of urgency but also tender love. She finally nodded and picked her up, and the two of them disappeared through the door to the shop.

Struck by an unconscious thought about the biggest love in my heart, I smiled. I would do the same thing for him.

It didn't matter if I was late to my show or to an award ceremony. Oliver always came first.

My heart ached to be back home as soon as possible and rescue him from his father. Not that I didn't love the man, but he wasn't great fun to be around.

"I can't wait to see you become Boston's Nigella Lawson," Chloe said, her voice carrying a pitch of excitement. "It's gonna be literal food porn."

I sighed. "I don't know if I'm gonna be all that good. It's a steep reputation to live up to."

Chloe snorted. "Are you kidding me? You've got this nailed like no chowderhead ever could! Selene, you rose like a literal goddess from the ashes of broken-down trailer parks filled with unemployment and drug pushers. You went to Cordon Bleu. Girl, I don't know why you keep putting yourself down like that, but as long as I'm here, I'm gonna keep holding you up and putting you back on the damn pedestal, just where your sweet BBW ass belongs."

This made me chuckle. Chloe Nguyen was a direct import from Japan, where she'd grown up with her African American mother and Asian father.

Now twenty-seven, she moved to Boston five years ago to study culinary arts and wound up apprenticing under me. The day I hired her, I knew she would be much more than just another employee.

Her acumen was sharp, her tongue sharper. You don't get people like that often. She showed me parts of myself that I couldn't bear to bring out. Because I . . . even with everything I'd achieved in my thirty years on this Earth, I was inadequate.

Nothing could convince me otherwise.

There was so much I still had to do. So much I needed to build for the fire in my heart, the song in my veins, my son. I needed to make an empire for him.

And time just wasn't long enough.

The Southie I'd grown up in belonged to working-class Irish Americans.

It was one of the oldest American neighborhoods, and the people who made it home were mostly immigrants who needed to flee from the potato famine that struck Ireland in the 1800s.

Imagine living in a neighborhood where every damn person is somehow connected to the other. You literally began your conversations by saying, "Do you know . . . ?" It was expected that each of us had to be related to someone from the other end of town.

Living in Southie branded me the day I made my appearance in Greenwood Hospital on the Lower End.

In 2014, a news article debated the possibility of changing "Lower End" to "Broadway Village".

I grimaced at the thought.

You could try to take the classism out of the name, but you couldn't take it out of the minds of the people who defined my childhood. Even at the time, the city side of South Boston was undergoing gentrification at lightning speed. One day, it would go on to become one of the highest-valued realtor locations in Boston.

My childhood was spent in the West Side, or, like I said, the Lower End. This little stretch was dominated by housing projects. My family lived in a row house near a traffic circle separating Old Colony from Old Harbor.

I was the youngest of five children.

I did not know much about my father, but from what I'd gathered—and word travels quickly when you're in a town where everyone knows each other—he was a gifted student who met my mother at South Boston High.

He had the mouth of a Boston cabbie and a reputation for being a notorious charmer.

And my mother, bless her soul, was always soft when it came to men. She liked to think that her validation depended on the men in her life finding her beautiful.

There were days I worried I'd inherited that from her. On those days, Chloe was my refuge.

Anyway, Dad died a month before I was born. Again, I only heard what had happened, but it was an overdose. But Mom used to tell me he was a good man, never had an affair, and never had eyes for anyone but her and the children.

I liked to believe that. I liked to believe that he was the singular manly angel in her life before it went to shit because each guy she brought home after that routinely abused her and us kids.

When I finally escaped, I thought I'd never forgive her.

But there are occasions when I feel I may have been a little too hard on her. She was the product of poverty, multiple jobs, and running after kids she didn't ask to have. It couldn't have been easy.

I was glad I didn't feel the same way for Oliver, though. To me, he was my sunshine. Maybe part of the reason I clung to him so hard was because I could never get pregnant again.

"Hey," Chloe said, her soft voice jolting me out of my golden hour flashback. "You okay?"

I shook my head. "Yeah, no. I'm fine. Just had to go back for a minute there. But I'm alright now. I can't wait to tell Dave the news."

She grimaced. "Sure. I'm happy he gets to know he's living with a prodigy. But don't get your hopes up, okay? You know how he is."

Chloe, like everyone else in my team and life—barring my older brother, Ben—thought that I was wasting my time around Dave.

They believed I was destined for more incredible things. They could be right, but likely because they didn't understand the need. I had to think he would come around and see that my successes weren't hinged on his failing at life.

He'd come to a point where he honestly thought that he couldn't keep up with me because I was becoming too "common". That was what he liked to call people who made it on their own. He believed I'd do better if I stayed at home, cooked his meals, and tended to our son.

But I was stubborn. I wouldn't leave him—growing up in a Southern Baptist home had taught me to stick it out no matter what—but I wouldn't let him command my life.

"You should leave him, you know." Chloe scowled heavily. "Good for nothing asshole that he is, I can guarantee he's going to throw a hissy fit when he hears Netflix has given you your own show. He'll say shit like you don't deserve it, you're gonna mess it up . . . you know where I'm going with this, Sel."

I did. But my family wouldn't. Ben would be the one having the hissy fit if I brought up the topic of divorce. Marriage was the most sacred of unions to him—even if we'd grown up knowing nothing but failed relationships. And I adored Ben.

He was more than my older brother. He was the only one in my family I still had any connections to. I cherished that.

"Ben would be the one throwing the hissy fit if I left him, Chloe."

"You Southern Baptists," Chloe grumbled.

"You should try speaking to the Lord sometimes," I teased her, knowing full well that Chloe was an absolute non-believer.

"Hey, the last time I prayed to the Lord, I asked him for a martini instead of a miracle," she replied before breaking into an infectious bout of laughter that caught on to me.

The driver banged a Uey, and I was home in five more minutes.

My penthouse in Seaport was a far cry from the rowhouse of my childhood. It was one of the most secure residences in the city.

I'd left no stone unturned when it came to surveillance and comfort. My son would have the best of the best.

I said goodbye to Chloe and asked the driver to drop her home. On the way up, my mind was full of all the possibilities that were about to unfold.

"Please, God," I murmured. "Give me a sign. Show me he's still with me, and he still wants to fight for our son and our marriage. Don't let him give up on me."

It was as if I already knew he wasn't going to give me an easy time. Dave had been a different man when I was new to this city. He was one of the first friends I'd had. This was before he gave in to alcoholism, the Irish scourge.

It began with one drink, and he was hooked. There was a time when he was on the route to becoming one of the best gastronomic chefs in Boston. But restaurants refused to hire him when he gave in to his vices.

He became a liability—misbehaving with customers, messing up orders, believing he was a god. In the service industry, all of this pointed to a man unhinged. Soon, he was unemployable. Not before the media ripped him to pieces, though.

I still thought part of the reason he hated me was that the media portrayed me as someone relatable, someone easy to fall in love with—while he was often shown as the singular impediment in my life.

They thought they were doing me a favor by stirring the pot of my marriage. They refused to believe all they were doing was causing me a world of pain.

I stepped into the living room, running a trembling hand over my sleek ponytail. A sigh escaped my lips as I stepped out of my Louboutins and felt my feet touch the soft ground.

Modern and minimalist, my home's clean, neutral lines welcomed me like a haven.

“There you are.”

His drawl told me everything I needed to know. Against everything I’d decided, I felt my blood begin to boil. It wasn’t even seven in the evening, and my husband lay sprawled on the couch, his eyes red, his hands nursing his favorite mistress.

“Are you out of your mind?” I hissed. “Where’s Ollie? Why aren’t you watching him, Dave?”

“Oh, shut up!” He tossed the empty glass in my direction. But I’d long practiced dodging his antics, so I moved deftly. It hit and shattered against the north wall, shards ricocheting across the room.

“Look how fat you’ve gotten,” he hissed, leering a smile at me. “I’d still do you, but no one else will. Is that why you’re still here, Sel?”

“Or is it because of that two-faced fucker of a brother you have? Did you read the *Daily Herald*?”

He mimicked a girlish, high-pitched voice. “*Our beloved Kitchen Goddess deserves so much better than the drunkard she’s made her home with! Vote if you think there’s something going on between her and Andy Cruz!*”

He got up but decided he wasn’t feeling stable enough and dropped back down before pointing an accusing finger at me. “I thought you were working with Andy Cruz on a new project. Is this your project?”

He scoffed. “Getting close and sticky in the kitchen? Do your customers know you’re serving them a side of his nasties?”

I felt my ears go red. “Andy is nothing but a colleague,” I replied tartly, refusing to let him get to me. “You know that as well as I do. I refuse to have this conversation with you right now, Dave. Talk to me when you feel sane.”

I tried to walk past him, but he reached out, pulled my hand, and pushed me down on the floor in front of him.

“That’s where you belong,” he hissed. “At my feet. Have you forgotten it was me? I gave you your fucking wings. I was

your friend. Look what you've gone and done to us."

I held my tears back, knowing full well they were wasted on him. "Dave," I said, trying to still be gentle. "Don't do this. You know I love you. You know I want us to survive, to get through this—for us, for our child."

"*Pshaw.*" He snorted, pushing me backward. I fell back on the carpet. This time, I got up, dusted my skirt, and sighed.

"I'm going to bed."

"Go to a whorehouse where you belong, cunt. And don't talk about me being here for you or that boy. Everyone knows you both hate me and want me gone. He's nothing but a little shithead, anyway."

There. That was the exact moment that blew my fuse. I had this little quirk from my childhood—maybe it was born of a base urge to keep myself safe, no matter what.

I reached into my skirt pocket and withdrew a sleek pocket knife. In a quick second, I was next to him, holding it against his throat.

He let out a scruffy chuckle. "Whatchu gonna do, Sel? Kill me? *The Kitchen Goddess loses it in a fit of passion and murders her husband!* That's some headline."

"I'm not going to kill you, Dave," I whispered, my eyes burning. "But you say one bad word about Ollie, and I'm gonna cut your face up so bad your whore from two doors down will scream and run when she sees you next. Now, fuck off. Get out. Come back when you're sober."

It hit him where it was meant to.

He hoisted himself from the couch and muttered profanities all the way to the main door. I could still hear him cursing as he headed to the elevator, likely to end up in the arms of one of his one-night stands.

I shivered and closed my eyes. I wouldn't think of that. Instead, I spent the next thirty minutes cleaning the living room. I didn't want Oliver to wake up to this.

A tiny shard of glass pricked my finger as I cleared the clutter that had become my life.

I ignored the jab, and once I was done and had taken a shower, I slowly made my way up to my son's bedroom.

I opened the door and found him sitting on his bed. He looked at me with bleary, doe-like eyes. "Dada okay?" he asked, his tone a little sad.

How my heart broke.

I climbed into bed with him. "He'll be okay when he comes back home, darling. How was your day?"

He shrugged his little shoulders. "Was ok. Marla said I getting good in math. I learn tables."

I hugged my little boy, reveling in the sweet smells of bubblegum shampoo and honey on his skin. I couldn't ever be near enough or hold him close enough. "You're going be the best little mathematician."

"But I want to go space," he quipped, giving me a toothy little smile.

"You'll be amazing no matter what you do, Ollie." I kissed the top of his head and opened a book to read to him.

He fell asleep on page five, where a wizened old wizard told a little adventurer that the world would always hold magic for those who believed.

I read the line again and again after my son drifted off. At some point in the night, my eyes closed as well.

The following day, I woke up to a number of messages on my phone. Most of them were congratulations from my friends and extended family for bagging the show.

Ben's frantic text said he'd proposed to his childhood sweetheart, Abigail. And there was something from Dave. I rubbed my eyes to make sure I wasn't hallucinating.

But deep inside, I'd already known this was going to happen.

I deserve better than staying at home with a little brat and watching you live the life of my dreams.

Sorry, Sel. I'm leaving you.

SELENE

Three Years Later

There were worse things than not being the maid of honor at my brother's wedding. Abigail had reserved that spot for her best friend, and honestly, I was fine with it.

We got along because we both loved Ben, albeit in different ways. I wanted Ben to be free and have his own life. Abigail was the kind of person who needed him around every second of her day—and that was okay too.

In fact, I think that was what Ben preferred. He liked the idea of being grounded to someone.

“Sel, you look so pretty,” Abigail said as I stood in front of her in my lilac bridesmaid's dress. I'd kept my red hair loose, allowing it to just blow in the ocean air. A pair of diamond huggies clung to my ears.

I didn't want to take any attention away from the bride today. And she looked stunning in her pristine white gown, her eyes shining with the prospect of the future.

“Forget me,” I replied. “Look at you. you could literally be a fairy walking down the aisle. Ben's lucky.”

“Oh,” she replied, giving me a smile. “That's so sweet of you to say. I know this will happen to you again! Just be open to options, you know?”

Chloe took a sharp breath beside me, but I flicked my hand, willing her not to pull one of her classic stunts and say something ridiculously inappropriate.

This was how Abigail and I spoke for the majority of our association. I knew I'd learn to love her as a sister-in-law, but hell, I'd never like her.

She reminded me of everything I wanted to leave buried in the past.

About an hour later, we gathered around the venue.

"Uncle Ben looks handsome," Oliver said. I wholly agreed with him as I watched Abigail walk down the aisle to marry my brother. I was unabashedly weepy.

The tangy aftertaste of happily ever after mingled with salt from the ocean and settled on my skin and lips. I was so proud of my brother.

"Do you know why Uncle Ben married Abigail, love?" I asked Oliver, playing with the rush of red curls on his head. My son was growing into a beautiful little boy.

He was a bit gangly for his age, but with those hazel eyes and fierce, shocking crop of ginger hair, he could light up any room.

"Because he loves her?" he replied innocently.

"That, and because they are best friends."

The bride and groom exchanged vows upon a wedding aisle adorned with delicate rose petals and embellished in coral and gold shades.

Rustic wooden chairs flanked the aisle, each complete with billowing fabric in soft pastels dancing in the summer breeze.

"This is a dream wedding," Chloe said, letting out a sigh that sounded a bit like a grunt. "I swear, if I ever get married and I don't do it near the ocean, send me to jail or kill me before I walk the aisle."

"I can't kill you, Chlo."

"Oh, what good are you?"

Beyond the aisle lay the majestic expanse of the Boston Harbor. The azure waters of the calm Atlantic glistened under the sun's setting glow.

It was a picture-perfect melding of bronze and honey-lemony-yellow. It reminded me of the sunsets I used to enjoy with Ben when we were kids.

This was a little weekend luxury for us. Anytime I needed a break from home, he'd bring me near the ocean, for this was where I felt the most alive.

"Sel, one day," he'd say as we strolled the Harborwalk. "One day, you're gonna be old enough to make choices. I want you to do something that makes you happy, but also, don't stray too far from your roots."

That was always Ben. He was the family's loyalist. I liked to think that he had to be that way because he grew up faster than the rest of us kids.

By the time I was twelve and he was sixteen, he was more of a parent to me than my mom.

I learned cooking from him. He mastered the basics at a young age because he needed to take care of us.

But the day I stepped into our stuffy little kitchen, its expanse rife with the smells of garlic slowly roasting on a stovetop, I knew I'd found heaven. I was about three or four years old at the time.

From then on, I'd stuck to him like a leech whenever he went into the kitchen. I loved being around food. It was so vibrant, freeing, colorful, and lush—it reminded me of everything my life could not be at the time.

"I'm going to be the greatest chef in the world," I'd vow, giving him a little grin as he'd hand some sweet treat he'd gotten for me.

It was usually whoopie-pies, these cake-like crumbly sandwich cookies that had a creamy marshmallow filling in the center. I could still taste the sugar on my lips if I closed my eyes.

I'd experienced a world of luxurious dining from then to now, but nothing would ever come close to the fulfillment of eating a whoopie pie on the Harborwalk.

“Chef, huh?” he’d tease me. “You gonna go abroad and do fancy courses?”

“I sure am. And I’m gonna learn to bake, and then one day, I’ll have my own little shop. You can come and get all the goodies for free, Ben. I’ll never charge you!”

He’d stopped and turned me around so I faced him. His silhouette was mirrored against the backdrop of a blood-red setting sun, and it cast a strange halo over him, almost like he was on fire.

“Then hold fast to that dream because you gotta get out of here, Selly. When the time is right, you need to work hard enough to make that dream of yours come true because the longer you stay here, the staler you’ll get.”

I admit it. I didn’t fully grasp the meaning behind his words then, but looking back on things, Ben was the sole reason I managed to get out of Boston, even with the scholarship.

My mother refused to hear of it—it was unfathomable to her that a girl could actually leave her home turf and go to a foreign country to achieve shit. She wanted me to marry and settle down and give her grandkids.

This was part of the reason she never got to meet Oliver. Like I said, Southie had changed. The scars . . . they remained the same.

“Just look,” Chloe said, taking my hand and pointing to the horizon. Waves rhythmically lapped against the shore.

Against a setting sun cast in gold and scarlet, a smattering of colors unfolded in the sky.

All at once, it came alive in shades of vibrant pink, fiery orange, and soft purple against an indigo expanse. The sun cast a fiery sheen upon the water.

Suddenly, I could not tell the difference between the sky and the sea.

“They’re making their vows,” I whispered, leaning forward. Oliver moved closer to me as if by instinct so we

could listen to Ben and Abigail make their promises to each other.

The sweet words were tinged with the hope of forever. I never found it cliché because what would we have without these words? I wished . . . but no, I would not think about the divorce today. That was done.

We finished the final procedure last week. Dave had been mercifully sober during the proceedings. I'd allowed supervised visitation on the grounds that he went to counseling.

I was pretty sure that'd end up in complete and utter failure.

He was a changed man, but not in a good way. He'd grown thinner than before, with all the bearings of an alcoholic whose life had gone to shit. Last I heard, he'd found himself a job in another country. Good for him.

"Hey." Chloe nudged me gently. I cast my eyes at her, and I knew she could see the sadness in them.

"You did your best, Sel."

We watched Ollie jump up from his chair and run toward the newly-married couple.

"Did I? Maybe the knife bit was overkill."

"I'd have actually cut him up instead of just threatening him," she snapped back. "He had the gall to insult your kid. That's the person he's supposed to be protecting. All he's ever done is make you feel like crap, Sel. And he keeps blaming his failures on you and Ollie. Tell me you can see that?"

I could. "I know, Chlo. It's just not easy. Not with the background I have."

Even Chloe understood this. As one of the few Southern Baptist families with an origin point from Southie, I'd been indoctrinated and inundated with ideas regarding the sanctity of marriage.

People in my extended family didn't care if I lived separately from my husband, but the second the topic of

divorce cropped up, I was into taboo territory.

Love and respect were secondary to social commitments, and by agreeing to Dave's request, I'd pretty much alienated myself from all my family except Ben in one fell swoop.

Even Ben—there were times when he kept asking me to reconsider and speak with Dave and sort things out. I couldn't bring myself to tell him that this was no one-way street.

"It's going to fall in place," Chloe replied after a moment's silence. "But right now, can I interrupt the cloudy skies in your head with a bit of a sunny forecast?"

I grinned. "Fire away."

"There's this absolutely dreamy guy who can't take his eyes off you. He's just sitting two chairs back, but don't make a fool of yourself, for God's sake."

Of course, I did just that. I turned my head back immediately, hoping to scare off said man with a glare. But the face that my gaze landed on left me stumped for a good second.

I knew he'd be here. He was, after all, one of my brother's three best friends. Plus, it was his restaurant—Harvest and Hearth—that had done the catering for the event. But I'd never get used to having him around.

He raised the glass in his hand to me, his smile lazy and devilishly charming.

And I could feel this churning in my stomach that made me want to do sinful things. I turned my face forward, my cheeks furiously red.

The bride and groom moved to cut the cake, which had come straight from my pastry shop. It took me about a day's time to make, and I couldn't be happier with the result. From the looks on the faces of the guests, it delivered in taste too.

Lunch was an equally glorious affair. I could have lived on the lobster rolls alone, but everything else—the decadently lush chicken marsala, the tender prime rib roasted with

seasonal vegetables, and the delicately baked scrod—screamed perfection.

Dessert was a sweet surprise, fresh Boston cream pies.

“Oh my gosh, these are so good!” I rolled my eyes as the sweet cream exploded on my tongue. “I’m glad I didn’t do the desserts because this is better than anything I could have come up with.”

“That’s high praise coming from the best pastry chef in all of Boston.”

I wheeled around, almost dropping my plate in haste at the sound of the honeyed baritone that sounded way too close for comfort. Aiden Brown was standing in front of me, that same lazy grin on his face.

Oh, God, he was handsome. He was built just the way I liked—steel but with a touch of human softness. He’d grown a chestnut stubble to complement his unruly hair, and his green eyes bored into mine.

It was like he had X-ray vision and could totally see what I’d look like without this skimpy satin number on me. I felt the same way I had when Ben brought him over from school one day.

I’d trailed after the two of them like a lost puppy. When I’d finally gone to get Aiden my last pie from the fridge, I’d overheard him calling me “Chubby Selly” and asking Ben when I’d leave the two of them alone.

I was eleven at the time, and I still considered this my first heartbreak.

“I always give credit where it’s due,” I replied tartly. My internal monologue was doing stupid stuff to my brain cells.

Tell him you still have a crush on him.

God, look at how cute he’s gotten.

How the fuck are you not kissing him?

I had this irresistible urge to toss the plate of food aside and bolt from there, but before I could do any such thing, Ben

strolled up to me with Abigail on his arm.

He was being trailed by the other two of their fantastic four—Dominic James and Niall Donovan. I couldn't take my eyes off the boys.

It struck me as ridiculously unfair that they'd all struck the genetic lottery while I felt like an overheated casserole on my best days.

“What is this, some kind of a hunk fest?” Chloe hollered, and for once, I couldn't blame her.

Dominic was so chiseled he looked like he'd been cut from the most expensive marble by the Maker himself.

Jet black hair, messy curls, sinful chocolate eyes.

And every inch of Niall's arms was covered in tattoos. He could be in a band with that messy bun and those fuck-me-right-now blue eyes.

The three of them looked like they were the male versions of *Charlie's Angels*, and for once, I wouldn't mind being Charlie himself.

Make no mistake—I knew the limitations of my upbringing. I made my peace with it on most days, even the most conventional parts of it. It didn't mean that I agreed with any of it.

And right at that moment, I was getting a good old-fashioned reminder of all the ways I'd wanted to be loved by men who knew what they were doing.

“Look how you've grown up,” Niall said. His voice sounded like aged wine and something akin to the deepening of the night. “And become all gorgeous too.”

Immediately, the defensive streak that was primary to my nature came through. “Really? So you're saying I don't look like ‘chubby Selly’ or smell like day-old clothes and stale bread?”

The men exchanged glances and a quick grin. “Nah,” Aiden drawls. “You don't. But you still got that wildcat streak in you.”

Ben cleared his throat, clearly not liking the direction in which the conversation was going. Abigail was already casting dagger eyes at his friends.

She was likely wondering about the ways in which she could keep Ben from spending too much time with them. I pitied her for that—nothing would keep my brother away from these three.

“Sel, stay for the night?” Ben asked, his tone slightly reproachful. “It’s hardly any fun if you’ve got to leave right now.”

I shook my head but leaned in to hug him. “You know how it is, Ben. I have to be on set at six in the morning. And Ollie needs to get some sleep.”

All this while, Ollie remained steadfastly hooked to my skirt, but when Aiden leaned down in front of him and whispered something in his ear, he broke out into peals of laughter. I looked at Aiden suspiciously.

“What did you just tell my son?”

“Just boy stuff,” he replied. I wanted to whack him for his audacity. But I hadn’t heard Ollie laugh like that in a long time.

“Abigail.” I turned to my sister-in-law, wanting to end the evening on a peaceful note. “You’ve never looked more beautiful than you do tonight. I’m so happy for the two of you.”

“Oh, I’m just looking forward to when I’ll be maid of honor at your next wedding!”

Way to go, bitch.

I decided I’d had enough of her backhanded compliments and kissed Ben’s cheek before picking Oliver up and heading toward the exit. It was getting late, and I needed to put him to bed and get some work done before the morning.

On the way to the car with Chlo, Aiden caught up with me. “Hey, can I take a minute?”

“I don’t have one.”

“How about half a minute?”

I groaned and stopped in my tracks. Chloe disengaged Oliver from my arms and carried him back to the car, a smug smile on her face. I knew she'd be asking about him and the other two the second I got in.

“What? What do you want, Aiden?”

Aiden continued looking at me for what felt like much more than thirty seconds.

“It's just . . .”

I raised my eyebrows, waiting for him to finish his thought.

“I thought it was stupid of Abigail to say what she did. And I think you're doing an amazing job for yourself. You don't need a man to complete you. Maybe you need one or a few to . . .” He teased over the words lightly. “Show you a good time.”

Oh, God. I knew I was turning my least favorite shade of beetroot red.

I should have felt scandalized. I should have thought of all the boundaries. But all I saw at the moment was this green-eyed hunk who was saying something that made me feel more alive than I'd ever felt, even with Dave.

“That's . . .”

“Scandalous?” he asked, chuckling. “What's life without a little scandal now and then, Selene? From what I remember, you always liked being the rebel.”

With that, he turned around, whispering a low tune under his breath. I watched him walk away, the twinge between my legs growing and stretching into my belly.

I tried to shake off the feeling of being unbalanced and made my way to the car. True to my prediction, Chloe immediately bombarded me with questions about Aiden, Niall, and Dominic.

“Chlo, you gotta stop badgering me,” I finally groaned. “I don’t know what they want. They’re fucking gorgeous, but Aiden . . . those boys are bad.”

Luckily for me, Oliver was sound asleep.

“So, why can’t you have somethin’ good with bad boys? What are you, a grandma?”

“Do you know how wrong this could go?”

“All I know is all of them looked like they could eat you up.”

End of preview. [Continue reading the story here.](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ajme Williams writes emotional, angsty contemporary romance. All her books can be enjoyed as full length, standalone romances and are FREE to read in Kindle Unlimited.

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