

SDLA EMPIRE
HOCKEY ROMANCE



Left Winger

LUST

LONDON CASEY

LEFT WINGER LUST

SOLA Empire Hockey Romance

LONDON CASEY

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LEFT WINGER LUST

The baddest and wildest and hottest guy on the SOLA Empire has been secretly married this entire time?! The truth? YES.



I don't do this kind of thing.

I don't get on a plane alone. I don't end up gambling, drinking, and I definitely don't end up bumping into a sexy hockey player and marrying him all in the same night.

Except that's exactly what I did.

A while ago.

A long while ago.

So when I knock on Rome's door and find him with another woman, it's not that big of a deal.

I'm actually there for his benefit.

I want a divorce!

We both get our freedom and we both can forget about this crazy secret.
It's win-win.

Except... Rome doesn't want a divorce.

Think that's crazy?
Try this...

Rome won't get a divorce because he wants to put a baby in my belly!

Chapter One

ROME



"I CAN PROUDLY and officially finally announce you both as husband and wife!"

There was a pause.

Then...

"Oh. Yeah. Kiss your bride, Seb."

Everyone began to cheer as Sebastian and April stared into each other's eyes, smiles on their faces, taking their sweet old time getting to that first kiss as husband and wife.

When their lips finally did touch, it was soft at first, but then Sebastian pulled April in, dipped her and went for a real damn kiss.

I let out a loud whistle and clapped even harder for the newlyweds.

I looked to my right at Henry and saw him dabbing at the corners of his eyes.

To my left, Jago beamed with such happiness, I figured it was only a matter of time before he and Brea would run off to get married... or, you know, have an actual big wedding... since they were already married... *you*

know, that whole messed up story, right?

Or maybe they'd ask me to marry them, just like Sebastian and April did.

Surprised about that?

So was I.

They agreed upon it though.

They wanted me to get ordained and then marry them.

How could I possibly say no to that request?

Plus... I had to approach the entire thing logically.

Sitting in a sea of people wasn't going to work for my wedding vibe.

Even being part of Sebastian's groomsmen - which he ended up not having - would have helped a little.

But being the guy who married the couple?

Front and center?

Giving out these long speeches of beautiful love and perfect romance and a long, happy future?

Every single woman at the wedding had their eyes on me.

Aside from the cologne, perfume and some kind of sweet flower lingering in the air, I could smell the lust. The desire. The need. That suppressed jealousy that April was getting married and they weren't.

Weddings had a funny way of messing with a woman's emotions.

Their eyes went glossy.

They fantasized about love and their own wedding someday.

But the reality was what happened deep down inside.

All those wonderful emotions collided together...

... and they got horny.

After the vows were said and the kiss was had, they were ready to drink, dance, flirt... and perhaps... *fuck*.

I kept a smile on my face as I scanned through the large crowd of people.

There were way too many people at the wedding, fueled by the desire of the Verwert family.

Ellen made some lavish arrangements for Sebastian and April.
Of course that came at a slight price.

The price being a large guest list.

And cameras were allowed only out front - outside the venue.

That woman loved any kind of press for her hockey team.

Which we were all used to thanks to the insane antics of the team itself.

Right?

As Sebastian and his new wife walked down the aisle to excitement, I put an arm around Henry.

“You okay, big guy?” I asked him. “Too much crying makes you look weak.”

“Like you’d know how to show emotion,” Henry said to me.

“I keep my emotions between my legs. And there’s plenty there to offer. Now, look, Henry, it’s just you and me now. You know that, right?”

“What?”

“Look around, man,” I said. “Atlas has Hazel. And they have Juniper Evelyn.”

I nodded to where Hazel sat with Atlas’s daughter sitting in a chair next to her.

Wearing a purple dress, just like her mother.

The little peanut of a baby was no longer a peanut.

“Sebastian just got married,” I said. “Joe has Anna. And even Jago. He’s married to Brea. It’s just us, Henry. You and me. To run through all these beautiful women in need of some compassion and cock for the night.”

Henry elbowed me in the ribs. “You’re an asshole, Rome. It’s Sebastian’s wedding day and you’re using your dick like a sonar radar tracking enemy submarines.”

I threw my head back and laughed.

Henry didn’t like that either.

He walked away from me.

In fact, they all walked away from me.
To meet up with their women.
I stood at the makeshift altar that was covered in flowers.
I knew how good I looked in a tux.
I looked around again and began to catch the eyes of a few generous ladies.
A quick glance.
A flirty smile.
One even licked her bottom lip.
I loved weddings.
Forget all that declaration of love bullshit.
I just wanted the declaration of your panties on the floor and your legs wrapped around my face.



THE BRIDE BEAMED, the groom gushed and the wedding reception officially began.

They sat at a special table with a heart shape behind them made out of roses.

There was a custom ice sculpture of Sebastian playing hockey.

The thing must have cost a fortune, but Ellen Verwert lived for this stuff.

Just like the food and the booze.

Everything fancy and top of the line.

Plates that were huge but had one little thing in the middle and then were drizzled with eighteen colors of sauces that looked like some elephant with a paintbrush did it.

The booze though?

That part was just fine with me.

I hung around the bar, scoping things out.

I let the bride and groom have their moments and their fun.

Henry gave the speech.

He was the logical choice.

Hand a microphone to me and I would dish all the dirt I had on Sebastian.

Like the time we were at a strip club and he ended up stripping for two strippers.

And they paid him!

Or the time Jago and I handcuffed him to a bed in a hotel room, then lit his bed on fire.

And he cried!

He screamed and cried!

Okay, that story was a little bit of a dick move on the part of Jago and myself.

Sebastian did get burned a little. But not much.

Henry, of course, gave an elegant speech.

About love.

About friendship.

About creating a future together.

His eyes welled up with tears.

And I swear every woman at the reception stared at Henry with the horniest eyes I'd ever seen.

It was like Henry cracked some secret wedding code.

They liked tears... from a guy...

I knocked on the bar, took a shot of top shelf whiskey, then went to go find the newlywed couple.

I hugged April and told her she looked beautiful.

I also reminded her that if Sebastian didn't hit all the right spots later in bed I was available.

Then I hugged Sebastian.

Then I touched his face.

I kissed him right on the lips too.

Right in front of everyone.

“I love you, man!” I declared. “I’m so damn happy for you, man!”

I thought about the time back in college when I took a hockey puck to my balls and how bad it hurt and how I had to rest for two weeks and couldn’t have sex for a week.

That brought on the tears really quick.

There was a collective horny sigh in the room.

Next came the first dance between the new husband and wife.

Then they did the cake thing.

Smashing cake in each other’s faces.

People laughing and cheering.

I took a seat and just enjoyed the show.

When it was time to dance, most of the people went to the dance floor.

I hung back.

Patiently waiting.

Like a lion in the brush.

A very hungry lion.

The prey out there, walking around - *dancing*.

But I didn’t attack.

Just like a smart lion wouldn’t.

A smart lion would wait... for the right moment...

“Now we’re going to slow things down!”

And there it was.

The moment the slow music began to play.

Couples pairing up, getting close.

Sneaking in a kiss.

Women resting their head on the chest of the man they were there with.

The atmosphere instantly changing.

Gone was that partying vibe.

In came romance.

And I just sat and waited...

Bingo.

She wore a dark blue dress with black hair pulled back.

Her eyes were like dark chocolate.

Her lips pouty with a light shade of red lipstick.

As soon as she looked at me, I lifted a single finger.

Just a little wave.

She walked right toward me.

I did not stand up.

I did not move an inch.

I almost acted like she was invisible.

But the way her hips swayed in her dress...

I finally looked up at her.

“Sandra,” she said.

“Do you know who I am?”

“I do.”

“Careful with those two words. They’re being thrown around a lot today. Could get you into trouble.”

“Luckily we’re not getting married.”

“But I am the guy who performed the ceremony,” I said. “I still have the power...”

I grinned.

Sandra smiled and leaned down toward me. “The power to do what?”

“Well, I could say the words and technically we’d be married,” I said.

“Or I could say other words and you and I could find somewhere a little more private to talk.”

“You should speak now or forever hold your peace,” Sandra said.

I stood up and slipped my right hand to the perfect curve of the small of her back.

I loved the way women fit like puzzle pieces.

“Want to dance?” I asked.

“You don’t want to dance,” Sandra said. “Neither do I.”

I took her by the hand and led the way to the bar.

The obvious first stop was to get a drink.

I mean, we weren’t just going to tear each other’s clothes off without a proper drink together first.

What kind of guy do you think I am?

Sandra and I ordered a whiskey each, then walked from the reception area to the open floor of the large hotel.

The old, fancy hotel at that.

The place looked and felt like a castle.

Stone walls and chandeliers everywhere.

Tucked high in the mountains and all that.

The *ohh* and *ahh* effect for rich people or those who saved up a ton of money to spend one night at a place like this.

I led the way outside.

A perfect night at that.

Clear sky.

Full of stars.

Dark but not too dark thanks to whatever leftover light from inside touched the outside.

I found a spot where there were some tables and chairs.

I offered Sandra a seat.

She wanted my lap.

How fucking sweet of her, huh?

She straddled me and I pulled her dress up.

I touched her bare legs and smiled.

“You know this means nothing, correct?”

“I know that,” I said. “I’m not romantic.”

“Neither am I. I just hate weddings.”

“Then why are you here?”

“Friend of a friend situation,” she said. “Do you really want to know?”

“Nope.”

“Good.”

Our lips met.

Then our tongues.

She tasted like heaven - whiskey and lust.

I grabbed at her hips, feeling her gently rocking against me.

From somewhere behind me I heard a noise.

Almost like a giggle.

Sandra broke the kiss and I looked back.

Here came some other woman.

This one in a black dress with thin shoulder straps and cleavage that could keep a man busy for days.

She had fair skin, blonde hair, and I assumed bright blue eyes just based on everything else.

“Oh, shit, I’m sorry! I didn’t know someone was out here!”

“Don’t mind the show,” I called out. “Unless you want to join in...”

I winked at Sandra.

I waited for her to call me an asshole or something.

Maybe even slap me across the face.

What I didn’t expect was for her to put her right hand out.

“Come on,” she said. “You can join the fun. Let’s see if there’s enough of this big, strong hockey player to go around.”

For the record - there was way more than enough to go around.

Chapter Two

EMILY



THE CLOUD of smoke curled into the air and moved right for my face.

If I stared at the smoke long enough, it seemed as though it had a life of its own.

Thin, white wisps trying to tickle my nose and my eyes.

“Ellie?” I asked.

“Shh,” my best friend said.

She had what looked like a fat piece of white birch - *or the thickest cigarette ever made* - and she walked around me.

Over and over.

Making a circle of smoke.

She didn't speak.

I also didn't think she blinked either.

Now, none of that worried me. It didn't scare me. I didn't think my best friend was a weirdo.

Well, of course I thought my best friend was a weirdo.

What I meant was - I was used to it.

Ellie had her reasons for believing in what she did.
And I as her best friend would never question it.
Rumor had it that Ellie and I met in pre-school.
I had no idea how true that actually was though.
Our first memory as friends was in first grade.
When Jackson Bevin broke Ellie's favorite robin's egg blue crayon.
He did it just to make her cry.
So I smacked him across the face with a ruler.
I hit him so hard, the numbers 3 and 4 were imprinted on his face for a good hour.

The three of us got into trouble, had to talk it out, apologize, and shake hands.

As soon as Jackson walked away, Ellie and I looked at each other.

We stuck our tongues out, made a gross face, washed the hands that Jackson had touched, then declared two things.

One - boys were disgusting creatures.

Two - we were officially best friends for life.

Which brings us to me sitting in a chair in my apartment, sage flirting with my nose, making it wrinkle up and down.

"We should have done this in my house," Ellie said.

"Probably," I said. I waved my hand in front of my face. "My neighbors are going to complain."

Ellie froze. "Doesn't the lady next door cook cabbage? That's stinky. And don't wave the smoke away. You're pushing away the good energy. We need to surround ourselves with energy, Emily. I want this to go right. I just have this... feeling..."

"What kind of feeling?"

"Shh," Ellie whispered.

I gently began to rub my right leg.

I knew my only option was to wait for Ellie to finish up.

When she did, she sat across from me at my own dining room table and placed the thick sage - still burning - into the arms of a statue of a topless woman.

“You know, I don’t like this statue,” I said.

“Why? Afraid of a naked woman? Do you know how powerful the female body is?”

“Look at her,” I said. “Long flowing hair. Head back. And her boobs are chiseled out of stone or whatever the material is.”

“So?”

“They’re perfect,” I said. “The shape and size. Look at her nipples. They’re cute and perky. Mine aren’t chiseled out of stone. I got what I got, you know? We both know my left one is weirdly bigger than the right one.”

Ellie tilted her head. “Emily.”

“Sorry.”

“Our bodies are perfect the way they are. You can’t compare yourself to a statue. She has no life. No aura. No being. She’s not even real.”

“Ellie, I was just making a silly joke because I’m nervous.”

“Think about what your body is capable of,” Ellie said.

I nodded.

I smiled.

That was the whole point of Ellie and I hanging out right now.

And the sage.

And the statue of the woman with the perfect boobs and nipples.

I wanted to have a baby.



“CAN I tell you what I’m feeling?” Ellie asked.

“Yes.”

“There’s an energy right now here. It’s not a normal energy either. This

one is... different. It's bigger. Stronger. It almost wants to take my breath away..."

Ellie's eye grew wider.

Now, believe me, some of this stuff was bonkers to me.

And the first time Ellie started talking like this, it freaked me out a little.

What I quickly learned was this - *whatever makes you happy in your life, do it.*

Whatever brings you comfort.

Whatever makes you feel settled.

Whatever takes the edge off of how madly insane the world is... do it.

"Give me your hands," Ellie ordered.

I slid my hands across the table, palms facing up.

She grabbed my hands and pressed her thumbs against my palms.

It tickled a little.

"Oh, yeah," Ellie said. "This is big. Something big is happening or is going to happen. It's a thick energy. Like an invisible fog."

"You sure it's not the smoke?" I asked with a smirk.

"Don't be a jerk," she whispered.

"Sorry."

"Here's what I'm thinking and feeling," Ellie said as she took her hands away from mine. "I'm predicting a big surprise. Something really big is on the way for you."

"How do you know that?"

"You can't ask me that, Emily. You know that. It's all energy. It's feeling. It's opening yourself to what's around you."

I brought my feet up to the chair and hugged my knees.

I caught myself gently chewing on my bottom lip.

Ellie studying my face.

Smiling at me.

"Yeah, okay," I said. "You don't need to be all fancy and hippy to know

how to read my face.”

“You have such a bad poker face, Emily.”

“I don’t play poker. So it doesn’t matter.”

“What’s the news then?”

“Am I allowed to tell you? Or is there some kind of ritual?”

“Now you’re just being mean to me. To your best friend. And you’re hiding something from your best friend too.”

“I’m not hiding anything. I wanted to talk to you. That’s why you’re here. You chose to bring your *stuff*.”

I nodded to the statue.

“Are you really that insecure over breasts on a statue?”

“No. I just... you know... I wish I could have designed mine.”

“You can do that, you know. It’s called plastic surgery.”

“Isn’t that against your beliefs?”

“You’re really mean tonight,” Ellie said.

“I am. I’m sorry.”

“Hormones. I know your schedule. We’ve always been synced up. Right?”

I bit my bottom lip a little harder.

Ellie stood up. “Wait...”

“Five days,” I whispered.

“You’re late? Five days? Right now?”

“Right now,” I said.

“So, I’m bleeding and you’re not?”

“Yes,” I said. “That’s correct.”

“What are we doing here then?” Ellie asked.

“I wanted to give you the chance to do your thing. I kind of feel like I need all the good energy and vibes I can get right now.”

“So, you do believe in it.”

“Ellie, of course I do. We’ve been friends for how long? I believe in it all.

And right now I'm kind of scared to death."

"No," she said. "You can't do that. You can't bring in those words. That's bad energy. Okay. Here's what we do..." Ellie looked around. "I wish we were at my place. Um... okay. First. We go get a pregnancy test. Then we go to my place."

I walked into the kitchen and opened the spice cabinet.

I took out a small shopping bag and tipped it over.

A pregnancy test fell out onto the counter.

Ellie's eyes grew wide.

"I'm ready right now," I said. "I wanted you here with me."

Ellie let out a screech of joy, then grabbed the sage and the pregnancy test.

She left the statue with the nice nipples behind.

Which I appreciated.

Bad enough I was going to have my best friend watch me pee on a stick.

I didn't need some statue with epic boobs staring at me too.

Oh, yeah, I already knew Ellie would want to watch. There was no use in even trying to argue. And for all the years we've been friends, we've been through it all and seen it all. If we confessed how many times we'd seen each other naked...

Ellie opened the box for the pregnancy test and handed it to me.

"I feel something here," she said. "Something big is happening."

"I think I feel it too," I said.

I honestly wasn't sure what I felt. Or what I should have felt.

All I knew was that I had been tracking my cycle accordingly and I was definitely late.

Five days late.

That has to mean... right?

I sat down on the toilet and stuck the pregnancy test between my legs.

I looked at Ellie and smiled. "So, how was your day?"

Ellie laughed. "You're insane."

"No stage fright here," I said.

A few seconds later I put the clear cap on the pregnancy test and rested it on the edge of the sink.

I finished up and washed my hands.

"Now look at me," Ellie said. "No staring at the test."

"How long do I wait?"

"I'll tell you when."

"I really..."

"Don't say anything else," Ellie said. "We can't let our energy stray. It has to be focused on one thing. Okay?"

I nodded.

I suddenly bought all the way into Ellie and all her antics.

The smell of the sage started to get to me.

I stepped toward the open bathroom door and took a breath of non-stinky air.

"What we can do now is just start picturing it all," Ellie said. "Build the world. Tell the story to your head and heart. Live in it. That's how you properly manifest it. You have to live in it."

I nodded.

I took a deep breath.

My nerves started to get to me.

It all hit me at once.

That was how I knew it was time to check the pregnancy test.

Time to see what my future and fate held.

I really didn't get too deep into this stuff like Ellie.

But this time...

I mean, how could I not?

A pregnancy test?

I lived alone in an apartment.

I was a schoolteacher.

I...

“It’s time to look,” Ellie said.

“You do it,” I said.

“No. It’s your journey. You have to see.”

I slowly turned and took a deep breath.

Ellie placed her hands to her heart and smiled at me.

I cleared my throat and my mind, then approached the bathroom sink.

I looked down and the pregnancy test was...

Chapter Three

ROME



IT WAS a surprising twist when Sandra didn't make the cut to spend the night with me at home.

Or maybe it wasn't.

After all, in some sense, we all got what we wanted right there outside Sebastian's wedding.

The second woman had a name.

And, yes, I did remember her name.

Amy.

Even though I did call her *Anna* a few times.

Maybe that was some kind of slip to do with Joe's love...?

Maybe I could ask the real Anna that.

After all, she was a psychologist, right?

Anyway - back on the topic.

I preferred to live as the kind of guy who didn't kiss and tell.

At least in great detail.

Because the way it all happened...?

I was a lonely bachelor at a wedding.

Sandra and Amy were two lonely women at a wedding.

They didn't even know Sebastian or April personally either.

It was one of those '*I work for a company that does this thing for this other company that's connected to the hockey team*' kind of thing.

So it all worked out.

It shocked me a little when Sandra was the first one to come.

I knew I had magic fingers and all, but her grinding against me, nails like talons clawing at my shoulders.

She really liked when Amy hugged her from the side too as she came.

It was all very fun and sexy.

Especially being outside.

As soon as Sandra finished, she stood up and put herself all back together.

Her dress. Her hair.

She brushed her lips against Amy's and whispered, '*Thank you.*'

Then she looked at me and winked.

She turned and walked back into the building to go back to the wedding reception.

It took me a second or two to realize what had happened there.

That Sandra decided to use me for a quick orgasm.

I mentally applauded her boldness.

Now I probably would have been upset *but* I had Anna.

I mean Amy!

Her name is Amy! Not Anna!

And Amy was a little vixen.

Tipsy but not drunk.

She requested a dance with me.

We stood outside the wedding reception with the faint sound of the music playing.

Some upbeat, pop song that I should have known the title to.

Amy and I slow danced.
Which I preferred.
Her body inched closer to mine.
Kind of like a shy hello between us.
Two bodies getting to know one another.
All before the real fun began.
I knew I looked great in a tux.
Not to mention, I was the guy who married two people that day.
I stood there at an altar of flowers and married one of my best friends and teammates to the woman he truly loved.

And capturing that romantic moment, shifting it to a giant party with food, booze, dancing, and whatever else...

In other words, I slipped my hands around Amy's body and pulled her close against me.

She looked up at me, her fingers gently playing with the back of my hair.

"I've never hooked up with a hockey player before," she whispered.

"So I'm your first?"

"If that's how you want to see it."

"What about baseball players? Footballs players?"

"Nope. None of the above. I never do this kind of thing."

"How many times have you said that in your life?"

"Did you just passive aggressively call me a dirty name?"

"Oh, I'm sorry. Why can't we all just be whores and enjoy life?"

Amy laughed. "I'm going to pretend the word *whore* didn't just leave your mouth."

Then we shared our first kiss.

The first kiss of many.

My lips kissing a lot of places on her sweet and tender body.

And her wild lips kissing certain places on my body too.

That was later, once we were back at my place.

Before that, as we were leaving the wedding reception, I looked back and gave a smile and a nod.

I wished Sebastian and April a lifetime of happiness.

As for me?

I just wanted one night of happiness...



... WHICH I DID GET.

I opened my eyes and found Amy sleeping way too close to me.

Cuddling up in my sheets, her face kind of pressed against my shoulder.

I made a cringing face but I did not cringe.

I didn't want to wake her up.

I kind of just wanted her to leave.

Unless, of course, she woke up and gave me those sleepy eyes that suggested morning sex before a quick cup of coffee and a goodbye.

Then again, I knew I ran the risk of her waking up and experiencing that dreaded wedding hangover.

Not from the booze.

From the allure of the wedding.

Fuck.

Waking up next to me, in my bed, thinking about the wedding and then what we did last night. All those feelings stirring together like a thick soup. Feelings getting all twisted and mixed up.

It meant we could easily go from having some guilt-free morning sex to suddenly acting as though something real had happened the night before.

She would have that perfect romantic story too.

To tell her friend.

How she and I met at a wedding.

How we hooked up.

How we woke up the next morning and knew something else was there.
Fuck...

I started to think of some plans.

How to get rid of Amy.

No offense to you, Amy. You were great last night. You were perfect.

I glanced at the bathroom door.

Halfway open.

There were plenty of things that could occur in a bathroom to gross someone out so much they'd snap back to reality and run like hell.

No. That won't work. I don't have to use the bathroom right now.

I looked at the gigantic flatscreen television screen mounted to the wall.

Perhaps if I turned the TV on and casually put on some porn... something really wild and crazy...

Too risky!

What if she wakes up and likes it?

Well, if Amy woke up and wanted to watch porn with me in the morning... maybe she was dateable after all then.

No. Rome. Be logical here.

Of course, there was the possibility that Amy would just wake up, look at me, and give that quick nod. The nod saying, *'Hey, Rome. We had a blast last night. Relax a little. No need to plan out taking a smelly dump to chase me out of here. No need to worry about a thing. I'm going to leave in a minute, okay? We can have sex one more time, sure. And, hey, we can watch some dirty movies too while we're at it. It's all good. I'll be out of here in no time. You'll just be some fun, sexy story I tell my friends when we're having a girl's night and I drink too much wine and confess what happened.'*

And, yeah, one nod could definitely suggest all of that.

First, I needed Amy to wake up.

I stared at her.

Sleeping and cute.

I made a cringe face again.

I opted to sneak out of bed and make myself some coffee.

I needed to get my head and thoughts in order.

After carefully sneaking out of my own bed, I stood up and started to turn but stopped.

I looked down at the insane bulge in my boxers.

My morning wood this morning was more like a *morning skyscraper*.

If I moved another inch or two, I would have smacked Amy under her chin with my dick.

I was raging hard.

I told myself it was just because I had to pee.

No, it has nothing to do with thinking about last night, or thinking about morning sex, or thinking about porn and dirty movies and...

I snuck out of my bedroom, grabbing an old pair of jeans that were on the floor.

It took me a few minutes to use the bathroom though.

For those not aware - being hard and trying to go pee really don't go well together. Let's just say there are different 'tubes' for different things.

So I stood there waiting for my body to calm down enough so I could go.

Then I put on my jeans and made myself a cup of coffee.

According to the glowing numbers on the microwave, the entire ordeal took about ten minutes to complete.

Amy was still in my bed.

Still sound asleep.

Which brought forward a whole other situation.

Having a morning after clinger was one thing.

Someone who thought a relationship was budding like a rose.

But having someone who treated things as... *real*...

Fucking yikes.

What did *real* mean?

It meant sleeping in, shuffling around without a care, acting like you lived here and owned the place and that we had been together for five years or something.

It meant waking up *as-is*.

No quick second or two to check your hair in the mirror.

Wipe the drool off your cheek.

Clean the sleepy crusty stuff from your eyes.

Adjusting your boobs in your tank top to make sure they were even.

If Amy was going to try and pull that nonsense, I needed reinforcements.

I needed help.

I looked at my phone.

The only person I could call who would understand this?

“Jago,” I whispered.

Chances were, though, Jago and his wife were still sleeping in some grand hotel room.

Then again, I could just fake a death or emergency.

According to my *morning after clinger* lies, my poor agent had ten heart attacks, three strokes, and was dead... twice.

Look, my track record on picking women for one-night stands wasn't all that great. Okay? You can hate me all you want. At least I'm being honest.

As that thought passed through my mind, Amy emerged from the bedroom.

She still looked sleepy and cute.

But she was put together.

“Morning there,” I called out.

“You didn't leave?” Amy asked.

“Why would I leave?”

Amy gave me a sleepy smile. “You know that routine, right? You leave to go out for something. You leave a note for me to find. Makes it seem like you trust me enough to be here alone so I take that as a good sign. I help myself to

some coffee and then leave. I feel happy. Then you rush home and never talk to me again.”

“Ah,” I said. “You’ve played this game before?”

“What did you think, Rome? I was going to wake up and think we were in a committed relationship?”

I wiped the back of my right hand across my forehead. “Whew. You just made my life easier.”

Amy got closer to me. “However, last night was pretty fun. I’m not saying we should rush out and get matching tattoos or anything... but it was pretty fun. Right?”

Fuck.

I opened my mouth, unsure of what was going to come out, when there was a knock at the door.

“Who is that?” Amy asked in a way too protective tone.

“Maybe it’s Sandra. From last night. Morning threesome?”

“I don’t share. That was a one-time thing. Got it?”

Amy’s eyes got wide.

Fucking hell...

I hurried to my front door and opened it.

I hoped for some kind of emergency.

Chemical spill? Something. Anything!

“Rome.”

For a second, my heart stopped beating.

I couldn’t breathe.

My entire body froze.

“Hey,” she said.

All at once, life came back to me.

I blinked a few times.

I almost thought for a second that I was dreaming.

That Amy woke up, got clingy, hit me in the head with a frying pan, and

knocked me out.

And this was all a dream.

“Who is this?” Amy asked as she stepped up next to me.

Things just got awkward.

And they were about to get even more awkward...

I took a deep breath and told Amy the truth.

Of who the woman was at my door.

“This... this is my wife.”

Chapter Four

EMILY



JUST HEARING him say those words - *this is my wife* - sent way too familiar chills throughout my body.

It's a long story, okay?

I hadn't seen Rome since *that night*.

It had been a while.

A long while.

Catching the occasional hockey game on television was one thing.

Rome on TV in his hockey gear and helmet and all that was a far cry from standing there with the man towering over me with those easy yet smoldering eyes of his.

The worst part about Rome was that he had *that look* to himself.

That *one-night-stand-I'm-a-manwhore* kind of look.

It didn't bother him one bit.

And apparently women loved it.

Hinted by the woman standing next to him in total shock over his statement that he was married.

Not that I was in any position to judge the woman.

I - after all - was married to Rome!

I took the idea of a *one-night stand with a manwhore* to a whole new level.

And of course I did that.

That was how I lived my life.

“You’re married?” the woman asked Rome.

Without a care or an ounce of losing his insanely sexy confidence, he looked at the woman and smirked.

“Well, technically, yeah,” he said. “I am married.”

I wasn’t sure how the truth was going to go over with this woman...

Yet when she wound up and slapped Rome across the face, I caught myself smiling.

Hearing the sound of the slap.

Seeing Rome a little surprised by it.

It was nice to see.

“You bastard!” the woman yelled.

I could see the look in this woman’s eyes.

She wasn’t the type to slap once and bolt.

It looked like Rome may have picked up a clinger.

A woman who easily wrote stories in her head post-sex and I couldn’t think of a more deserving person in the world to have this experience...

Except.

I had my own agenda here.

I wasn’t here for a show.

I had a purpose.

“How could you do this to me?” the woman yelled at Rome. “After all I did for you?”

“It was one night, babe,” Rome said to the woman.

“Do you know what I gave you?”

“Whoa, take it easy. It’s not like we went the backdoor route, babe. Okay?”

“The... what?”

“I think he means anal,” I chimed in. “I think he’s implying if you gave up the *devil’s door*, he would be a little more caring right now.”

I knew that comment only poured gasoline on the fire.

But I had to say it.

The woman’s eyes got really big.

Like... *really big*.

The size that warned she was capable of running into the kitchen, getting a knife, and giving Rome some unscheduled plastic surgery to his face or his dick.

Once again, I didn’t have time for it.

Plus, why should this stranger of a woman have all the fun slapping Rome?

Rome wasn’t looking.

It was more of a cheap shot than a real slap.

But I was his wife! And he obviously just slept with this other woman!

It did feel good to slap him though.

My slap made Rome step back.

He looked at me, devastated.

Touching his cheek.

I looked at the woman. “No offense, but you need to leave. This is my problem now. Sorry if you swallowed his cum or something. Just brush your teeth extra hard and maybe drink some mouthwash. Okay?”

The woman surprisingly didn’t protest at all.

She simply just pushed her way by me and took off.

That had to have been embarrassing enough for any human... *right?*

Not for Rome!

He continued to rub his cheek.

Then he smiled.

He smiled!

“Thanks for that,” he said. “She was starting to concern me. I should have brought the other one home.”

“The other one?”

“I was at a wedding last night. Had two at the same time. Only brought one home.”

I wanted to smack him again.

“I can’t believe you,” I said.

I don’t know why I said that.

What did I know about Rome?

Not much.

Just that he was wicked hot. Smooth with words. A great kisser.

And convincing.

“How about I take a turn here and ask a question or two...” Rome let his voice trail off.

“Go for it,” I said.

He stepped closer to me.

His eyes.

His face.

His messy bed hair.

I was captivated.

I stared up at him.

He asked me the obvious question.

“*Why are you here?*”



THIS IS *what happened that made me go visit my husband...*

I LOOKED DOWN at the pregnancy test.

There was one line showing.

No second line at all.

I looked at Ellie.

I picked up the pregnancy test and walked out of the bathroom.

I held the test up to the light in the kitchen.

Willing so hard to see a second line.

Okay, yes, this is probably confusing.

Did I want to be pregnant?

I mean, I get it.

As a single woman, you'd figure I would want to see a negative pregnancy test.

Like maybe I had too much fun one night and was now worried.

That wasn't the case at all here, okay?

I'm not that kind of person.

Not that there's anything wrong with it.

It's just not me.

I'm a teacher! A schoolteacher! Okay?

I'm more a nerd than some lusty woman.

And, yes, I wanted the pregnancy test to be positive.

Okay?

And, no, I wasn't hooking up with anyone.

Not even my husband...

"It's negative," Ellie said from behind me.

"I can see that."

"I can feel it. The energy. It's there, but it's misguided. That much I know now. It's a tricky energy. It's because of... well... it's your fault."

I turned and considered throwing the pregnancy test at my best friend.

"What?" I asked. "My fault? Do you know how much it cost..."

"Emily. I need to you sit down and listen to me."

“What? Are you going to light some more sage? Walk around? Huh?”

I cringed and felt a sting in my heart.

I placed the test down and reached out to hug Ellie.

“Sorry for saying that,” I whispered.

“Raw feelings,” she said as she hugged me back. “Want to just stand here and hug?”

“Yes, please.”

“I’m sorry, Emily. You’re not pregnant. Your womb is empty right now. You’ll get your period probably later today.”

She was right.

That night, just as I was getting ready for bed.

Boom.

Auntie Flow showed up.

“We need to talk about what’s really happening here,” Ellie said.

“Which is? My body is broken? Tarnished? Huh?”

“No. It’s not that. It’s what you’re holding onto.”

“What does that mean? What am I holding onto?”

“The past, Emily. That’s what you’re holding onto. It’s keeping you from moving forward.”

“My past? What happened in my past?”

Ellie stepped back from our hug and said one word.

“*Vegas.*”

My heart sank all the way down to my feet, then rushed right back up.

I got lightheaded for a second or two.

“How can you ever move on?” Ellie asked. “Think about it. You’re going to go through all this time and trouble to have a baby? And you have this *thing* hanging over your head. It’s bad energy. It sends mixed signals to the universe.”

“I don’t like where this conversation is going.”

“But you know it has to be done.”

“I can’t, Ellie. Think about it. I just show up? Knock on the door. Say, *hey there! Hello! It’s me! It’s your wife!*”

“Yes. That’s exactly what you do. And you know what happens after that. Just think about it. How can you move forward while carrying the past? It doesn’t make sense at all. Right?”

“I hate when you do this to me.”

“I know. But I’m never wrong.”

“You don’t know that.”

“Emily. The energy I feel right now. There’s something happening. Something huge. I thought it was you being pregnant. That part I was wrong about. But this energy...”

I turned away from Ellie, refusing to tell her she was right.

I went to check the pregnancy test again.

I tried to convince myself that I had some special radioactive urine that made it so a pregnancy test took longer for me.

How long, Emily?

Thirty minutes?

An hour?

Two days?

Come on...

The pregnancy test was still negative.

And no matter how long I waited, wanted it, watched it... or shook it... it would remain negative...



“ARE you going to answer my question, Emily?” Rome asked.

That’s when it all hit me at once.

The reality of standing there with Rome.

With my husband.

He had every right to ask me why I was there.
It wasn't as though we had plans to meet up.
I just kind of showed up.
Maybe in a way I saved him from that clingy, crazy woman.
But that didn't mean a thing now.
Rome's attention had moved on from her to me.
I thought it all over at the worst possible time.
Listening to Ellie had its ups and downs.
In the moment of facing a negative pregnancy test, her words made sense.
Staring up at the gorgeous hunk of a man who technically was my
husband... nothing made sense.
"Hello?" Rome asked. "Are you there?"
I blinked once.
Then a second time.
My face began to feel warm.
Very warm.
Oh, fuck, Emily... you're such a fool for listening to Ellie!

Chapter Five

ROME



IT ALL STARTED with her eyes.

They were these bright and crisp eyes.

They were the cliché blue color.

They were almost like precious marbles.

Blue mixed with green.

Just... attention grabbing.

Not to mention the rest of her too.

For a moment I tried to be a gentleman.

Stare at her eyes.

Give her a moment or two to collect her thoughts.

I didn't realize my question was such a monumental thing to ask.

Why are you here?

It felt simple enough.

I hadn't seen Emily in a long time.

She looked stunning.

Beautiful as ever.

That touch of sweet innocence that followed her around.

“Okay, fine,” I finally said. “I’ll just talk then. You saved my ass there with Amy. I did not see that happening.”

“Amy,” Emily said, frowning.

“A wedding thing.”

“Wedding...”

“Sebastian. Plays for the team?”

“I know who that is.”

“Yeah, well, him and April got engaged a while back. Cute story for them, I guess. I just enjoyed the wedding. You know?”

Emily’s eyes made a sudden move.

Down and right back up.

I only wore my jeans (and boxers).

“Here, come here,” I said. “You look like you need a drink.”

“A drink?” Emily cried out. “Do you know what time it is?”

“I meant... coffee?”

“Oh.”

“You’re thinking about boozing right now?” I whispered. “I mean, hey, I’m good if you’re good. You can hang out for the day. I’ve got nothing going on. It’s the off-season right now.”

Emily looked slightly bewildered. “Uh, coffee. That’s fine.”

I led the way into the kitchen and made Emily a cup of coffee.

I offered her cream and sugar and watched her finish making the cup herself.

“This is a really nice place,” she said.

“I guess so. It feels kind of cliché in a way.”

“Cliché?”

“It’s not exactly my dream place.”

“Well, it’s really nice.”

“Kind of came this way. When I bought the place. You can get it all

furnished and whatnot. It's a weird thing. Signing contracts and making money."

"Yeah, I bet. I know when I sign my contracts... I splurge. I order an extra burger from the fast-food place."

"Oh?"

Emily shook her head.

Her cheeks turned a freshly bloomed rose red. "That was a cheap joke."

"A joke?"

"Teaching joke."

"Right. You have contracts too..."

"Yes," Emily said. "Much different than yours. And I shouldn't complain. I mean, I have a great job. I love my job. I make a decent paycheck, I guess. It's nothing compared to what you probably make. Or, you know, I mean, I know what you make."

"How do you know that?"

"It's easy to look up. Everything is online."

"Really?" I asked. "Let's check and see then."

"Rome, stop. I didn't mean that in a bad way."

"Who said it was bad?" I asked.

I did a quick search online for hockey contracts and sure enough, there was a site that tracked all the deals.

I found my name and clicked it.

That opened another page with my stats and an old picture of me.

"I hate this picture," I said. "Look at me. This is my third year. I wonder how I get that updated."

I scrolled and saw my salary for the upcoming season.

I whistled. "Damn, I'm rich." I glanced at Emily and winked. "This is more than I expected."

"You don't know how much you're getting paid?"

"Once you hit the seven-figure mark, it kind of all blends together. Plus,

my agent, lawyer and accountant handle this stuff. I just get statements or whatever.”

“I think that would drive me crazy,” Emily said. “Not knowing everything.”

I put my phone down and turned to face her. “Sometimes you just have to trust people. Then again, my agent, lawyer and accountant are rich too. What’s a million here and there, right?”

“What about a million right here?” Emily asked and pointed to herself.

“How about you take your shirt off and we’ll talk?” I asked.

Emily let out a gasp.

Then she slapped me across the face. Again.

“What was that for?” I growled.

“I’m not a prostitute!”

“When did I say you were?”

“You just offered me a million dollars to take my shirt off!”

“Oh,” I said. “Shit. Right. That totally came out wrong. Sorry about that, Emily.”

Oh, she’s pissed at me right now.

“I promise I didn’t mean it like that.”

“Then what did you mean?”

I pointed to myself. “Look at me. I’m wearing jeans. Right? You’re way too overdressed right now. So I was thinking you could join me. And then we can talk.”

“Why can’t you just put a shirt on and be normally dressed like I am?”

“Really? Do you want me to put a shirt on? Have you seen my body? Are you blind?”

Emily rolled her eyes with a blushing disgust.

“And, plus, I’m wondering what you look like topless. I’m picturing an off-white colored bra. Like a coffee cream color. Right? Not thick padding either. Something comfortable. A little bit of a pattern on the edge...?”

“I’m not taking my clothes off, okay?”

“Wow. There’s a first.”

“What is?” Emily asked.

I smiled. “You’re the first woman to deny taking their clothes off while staying here.”

Emily shrugged.

Yeah, I wanted to see her topless.

But she denied me.

And it kind of made me want to see her topless even more.

Okay, Emily... you officially have my attention and have me intrigued.



“I’M NOT PUTTING on anymore clothing,” I said.

“And I’m not taking anything off,” Emily threw right back at me.

“Deal,” I said, offering my right hand.

She looked as though my hand was made of a chainsaw.

Then she slowly touched it.

“What is happening right now?” she asked.

“You tell me,” I said. “You showed up to my place. You know, between showing up unannounced and knowing my salary, it’s kind of creepy.”

“Just call me a good wife.”

Emily gasped and her face turned red again.

“That was a crazy night, huh?” I asked.

“Rome...”

“How about some more coffee? Want something to eat? I can’t have you standing here being all awkward on me.”

“The coffee was good,” she said. “I don’t need anything else right now. Just to talk to you.”

“You know, we really never did figure that thing out. That night. *Vegas.*”

I watched her psychically cringe at the sound of that word.

Which - hey - it made sense to me.

I was a hockey player.

That whole athletic fame and rich life coming at me faster than a slap shot puck from Sebastian.

Emily?

She was just a schoolteacher.

Sweet and innocent.

On the surface... right?

Not that I would know anything else.

Trust me, the whole *Vegas story* is one in itself.

“You have to eat something,” I said. “I can order out. We can eat in.”

I wiggled my eyebrows.

I had some dirty words ready to slip from my lips.

Phrases that included eating Emily out and eating her in my bed.

I held those back.

“I regret showing up,” she said.

My mood shattered. “What? Why?”

“This... whole scene. This isn’t me.”

“What scene? A nice house?”

“Your one-night stand, maybe?”

“What? I’m not supposed to enjoy myself?”

“I wish I didn’t see that,” Emily said. “I was just...”

“Yeah, what were you just doing here?” I asked. “You know what happened the last time we talked to each other. And now... this? Feels a little weird.”

“It is weird, Rome. Just as weird as us legally being married. Right?”

“If you say so.”

“If we’re married, isn’t half your contract mine?”

Emily grinned the most evil grin I ever saw on a woman.

I curled my lip. "Is that why you're here? For real?"

"No," she said. "But I will take that million dollars you offered earlier."

"And I'll take your shirt," I said. "And your bra."

"Earlier you said I didn't have to—"

"The deal has changed, sweetheart," I said.

Women like Sandra and Amy... they were called 'babe'...

Women like Emily - my wife - she was called 'sweetheart'...

"I could call a lawyer," Emily threatened.

"My lawyer would crush your lawyer. If you want to go that route."

"Okay, jeez, back off a little," she said. "You're getting all tensed up. I'm not here for your stupid money. I'm not that kind of person. I want nothing to do with your money or your contract or your career."

"Let me think this out then," I said. "You're not here for money. You're not here for sex... right?"

"Right," she growled.

"No money. No sex. No food either. You won't even let me order you a bagel."

Emily shook her head.

"Okay, sweetheart, I give up," I said. "What are you doing here? Come on. Tell the truth. What's up?"

"Rome. I want a divorce."

I stepped back. "What? You want a divorce? From me? Why?"

"Why?" Emily asked. "Why... why would we stay married, Rome? It was a... are you really that shocked right now?"

"Yeah. Who in the world would want a divorce from me?"

"It's not you, Rome. It's... obviously... us..."

"I think you're talking crazy now."

"Crazy? Crazy is staying married for as long as we have! You're obviously out sleeping with other people. Not that I would have ever expected you to be loyal to me."

“What about you? Are you out sleeping around?”

“Don’t ever ask a woman that question, okay?”

“Is that what this is about...?”

I started to think about it.

I felt myself getting a little irritated.

“You could have reached out to me,” I said. “You didn’t have to show up like this.”

“I’m trying to do something here, Rome. I’m trying to, you know, offer up some good energy.”

“I have no idea what that means,” I said.

“It means we can end the marriage and you can go happily along and screw anyone you want to. And you don’t have to worry about your wife showing up!”

I narrowed my gaze at Emily.

There was more to this whole thing than she wanted to tell me.

And I didn’t like being kept in the dark.

I didn’t like her showing up and demanding a divorce either.

Because... you know what...?

I kind of felt a little jealous not knowing everything going on in Emily’s head right then.

Chapter Six

EMILY



HE LOOKED RIGHT at me and said, “You came all this way just to leave this quick?”

Was he actually flirting?

I had no idea.

My experience with guys and flirting or just talking was not one I would humbly brag about.

Ellie would always make fun of me for not ever knowing what a guy’s intentions were.

One time when we were out for a celebratory drink after a long week of life, a guy told me he collected old textbooks. I envisioned some leather-scented library with books floor to ceiling.

Ellie pulled me aside and told me the guy probably had his old textbooks from college stuffed into the corner of a closet and he wanted to get me alone in his bedroom so we could forget about the textbooks and he could become familiar with studying my labia.

Yeah, that’s how Ellie talked.

As it turned out, she was right and I was wrong.

You'd think by now I would learn some of the ropes when it came to dating, flirting, men, and just plain good sex.

Nope.

The way Rome talked and stared at me when he talked...

It was like my feet lifted off the floor on their own.

I was instantly taken right back to what happened my one time in Vegas.

The Vegas story.

The untold story... *shh...*

“Look,” Rome said as he showed me his phone. “There’s a food truck right nearby. The guy who runs it has his nephew make deliveries on his bicycle. What’s cooler than that? Breakfast from a food truck delivered by a guy on a bicycle. It’s like...”

“Vintage?”

“Yeah. I was going to say it’s like something out of a movie. Or some TV show.”

“Rome. I really should—”

“You want a divorce. I think that warrants a conversation.”

It was the absolute worst time for my stomach to make a loud growling noise.

Rome began to smirk.

“Bacon, egg, and cheese on a bagel... with freshly squeezed orange juice...”



I REALIZED where I was and what was sort of happening.

I didn't know how it happened though.

In my mind it was supposed to be a quick conversation.

I pictured telling Rome I wanted to end our marriage and he would have

either said *cool, okay*, or *who are you again?*

Which would have justified it all for me.

Instead of that, I felt as though Rome wanted to cling just a little.

Not in a psycho way.

In a flirty way.

The kind of guy who enjoyed rejection because it meant just try harder next time.

The worst kind of guy.

A guy with confidence.

The snap of his fingers and my panties would be missing.

Oh, look, they're dangling from his mouth because he ripped them off my body!

I bite into my breakfast sandwich with force.

"I'm just curious," Rome said. "That's all."

With my mouth full of the delicious sandwich, I looked at Rome.

"I'm trying to have a baby!" I called out.

It sounded more like this - *I-tying-t'ave-bay*.

Rome tilted his head with confusion.

I held up one finger.

A very loud and clear voice in my head told me to shut the hell up. That my personal life was not Rome's business.

That was the thing with Rome.

He and I just... clicked.

It wasn't some sexual thing either.

It wasn't like we were throwing bagel sandwiches across the room to claw at each other's clothing. It wasn't like I was falling to my knees before him, pulling his jeans down, and tasting his thick, hard—

I coughed.

With food in my mouth.

Little chewed up wet pieces of bacon flew right at Rome's bare chest.

Did I fail to mention the hockey player was still shirtless?

Did I fail to mention that his body was built like every guy I fantasized about when reading dirty books on my Kindle at night?

Did I fail to mention that his chest looked lickable, like a lollipop?

“Are you okay?” Rome asked.

I turned away.

I stuck my hand out at him as though I had superpowers to keep him from seeing me gagging on my own breakfast.

The entire ordeal lasted maybe five seconds.

In my head and heart it was three hours.

My face burned red.

I drank orange juice to wash down whatever was left in my mouth.

I took a few deep breaths.

I blinked away some tears.

My level of embarrassment was at a fifty out of ten.

Rome had every right and chance to make it worse or just plain ask me to leave.

I wasn't some slutty woman like he had here before me.

I wasn't going to get naked and touch my toes or spread my cheeks or explore different holes in my body for the fun of it.

What did Rome do?

He got me a bottle of water.

Really expensive bottled water too.

The kind that looked like normal water but apparently had all kinds of stuff to it.

Specially filtered. Electrolytes. Balanced.

“The acid in the orange juice might burn your throat,” he said to me. “Then you'll keep coughing. Or it'll be irritated all day. It'll drive you nuts.”

They were maybe the sweetest, sexiest, and most informative words a shirtless man had ever said to me.

I appreciated his worry for my throat.

That sounds sexual, doesn't it?

Why does everything with Rome somehow end up sexual?

Oh, maybe because he's shirtless, gorgeous, and is oozing the capability to make me orgasm with one flick of his tongue to my clit...?

"Now what were you saying?" Rome asked.

I took a drink of the water. "I want to have a baby. Or, I'm trying to have a baby."

Rome stepped away. "What?"

"That's why I'm here, Rome. Okay? I'm trying to have a baby. And I need a divorce to make that happen."

"I don't think that's how babies are made, sweetheart."

Sweetheart.

I hated those stupid pet names.

But when Rome said it to me...

"Rome. You know what I mean."

His jaw tightened and he took another step back. "Does he know?"

"Does who know? And know what?"

"What?"

"What?" I asked.

The two of us were more and more confused with each passing second.

"Is this a comedy skit?" Rome asked.

"I don't... know..."

"You're confusing me, Em," he said.

Em.

My inner thighs trembled, sending a quaking feeling up them.

Up to you know where.

Em.

Him saying my name like that - *Em* - made my teeth want to chatter.

See what I mean?

You ask yourself how did a schoolteacher end up meeting a guy like Rome and marrying him?

This!

This is how!

He called me Em!

Then it all clicked in my head. Again.

He thinks I'm with someone.

He thinks I want to get pregnant with the person I'm with.

That makes sense.

The look on Rome's face suggested otherwise.

And, honestly, for a greedy moment or two, I liked the way he seemed uncomfortable and maybe even jealous.

"Em?"

"I think we're on different pages."

"I think we're in different books right now," Rome said.

"I can't believe I'm going to tell you all of this," I said. "How do you do this?"

"What? Act charming and caring? Just be glad all I want right now is to hear you talk. Because if I wanted to hear you groan my name..."

For a second, I thought I was going to pass out.

Rome quickly closed in on me and placed his hand to my back.

Almost holding me against him.

That wasn't going to help a thing.

"You okay, Em?"

"Yeah," I said. "This is Ellie's fault."

"Ellie?"

"My best friend."

"What does your best friend have to do with this?"

"Rome, I want a baby, okay? And, no, I don't have anyone in my life. I'm a single woman. And I'm going to have a baby. I'm sure you can connect the

dots. You kind of don't need a man to have a baby these days."

"According to what I remember from health class in school..."

"Funny," I said.

"I'm just saying, you need some sperm, don't you?"

"And I've got plenty to choose from," I blurted out.

That sounded much cooler and tougher in my head.

Rome threw his head back and laughed.

I wiggled out of his grasp and put distance between us. "Are you going to listen or not?"

"You're not explaining a thing to me. I'm so lost right now."

"Rome, I want to have a baby. I want to be a mother. Okay? And I've been trying. I've been going through... the process of it all. And it's not working. Which happens. It's not the end of the world at the moment. It just feels crappy though. Anyway, my best friend Ellie... she's..." *Oh, wow, how to describe Ellie?* "She's open minded. She believes in energies and that kind of stuff."

"She's a nut job?" Rome asked.

"No. She's not. But in this case... maybe..."

"Maybe?"

"I got my period, Rome. Okay? If you want to know. I took a pregnancy test before I got my period. Ellie told me that I needed to get rid of the past to move forward."

"I'm the past?" Rome asked.

"Yes. Us being married."

"So you think by us being married there's some magical, invisible force that's stopping you from getting pregnant?"

"I really shouldn't have come here," I said. "I don't know what I was thinking. I could have just sent papers. Or I could have called you somehow. This was a big mistake, Rome. I appreciate the breakfast and the coffee and all that."

“What about the sight?” Rome asked as he pointed to his chest and abs.

“Yes, thank you for that too,” I said.

“You can stay and stare. You can touch. You can kiss.”

“Are you serious right now? I’m going through a life crisis and you’re worried about sex? I just told you I have my period!”

“You have your period,” he said. “I don’t.”

“That’s a jerk thing to say.”

“Want me to tell you that I enjoy exploring the *red river*?”

“I’m leaving,” I said. “This was dumb. Us being married has nothing to do with me getting pregnant. Sorry for bothering you. I really do have to go now.”

I hurried by Rome and ran for the door.

I mentally saw myself slapping Ellie across the face.

As much as I loved her, sometimes her *energy thinking* was nothing but trouble.

I opened the door and took one step out and felt something touch my arm.
No.

Something grabbed my arm.

Rome gave me a slight tug and I looked back at him.

I let out an audible gasp.

My cheeks filled with heat.

“I respect it,” he said to me. “Everything you want to do. I respect it.”

“Okay,” I said.

“Can I at least keep in touch?”

Rome smiled.

I melted.

Another swift reminder as to how I ended up married to such a cocky, sexy hockey player.

Chapter Seven

ROME



AS I STOOD in the shower, I looked down at my cock.

My best friend ever, just hanging there.

Nice and thick.

Always nice and thick.

I was a blessed man.

Both what someone would call a *grower* and a *shower*.

Meaning I had the length and girth when flaccid to make your eyebrows raise up.

That was the *showing* part.

As far as the *growing* went?

It was best to back up and give my best friend some space to get ready.

And yet... my wife never experienced any of it.

That's right.

I married the beautiful and sexy Emily but I never slept with her.

It was just part of the Vegas story.

That's all.

I turned the shower off and stepped out.

I wrapped a towel around my body and walked to my private balcony right off my bedroom.

Of course I had a beach view.

My contract warranted it.

Like I told Emily, when it came to money, there were seven figures and I let my agent, lawyer, and accountant deal with it all.

When I wanted to buy something, I just did it and hoped I didn't get a call from someone saying I was broke.

Forget about money though.

I kept thinking about my wife.

About Emily.

Funny enough how I really didn't think about her all that much before.

That was part of our agreement.

Part of the *Vegas story*.

I honestly thought when the time came she would call, text, or just send some papers in the mail.

But to show up at my door?

Unannounced?

That was a sexy move.

Then to talk about having a baby? Without me?

A baby by herself?

I started to picture Emily pregnant.

Single.

Living alone.

Working as a schoolteacher.

I had no idea why that somehow mattered to me.

It was all very intriguing to me.

What was also intriguing, the way we seemed to just connect.

Like old friends.

An old married couple?

I gritted my teeth and went back inside to get changed.

This was the problem with the off-season for hockey.

There was this thing called *time*.

I had nothing but time.

My job was to stay in hockey shape and be ready for the next season.

Some guys across the league would go overseas and play for other leagues.

That was always an opportunity for me but I never jumped at it.

Now I caught myself imagining what it would be like somewhere across the world. Learning a new language. Playing hockey. The air being crisp and cold, icy and snowy.

Finding more beautiful women to share my passion for sex with...

Of course it was far too late for any of that now.

Which meant I was here.

Right at home.

The beach as my backyard.

Zero chance of cold weather and snow.

Thinking about my wife...

... and the fact that nobody on the hockey team knew I was married.



JUNIPER EVELYN FLIPPED a bright pink bucket full of sand.

A square bucket with the classic nooks and crannies to help make a sandcastle.

She slapped her hands on the bucket like a hair metal drummer for a whiskey-drunk drum solo.

Then she looked at me.

Her eyes lit up and she smiled.

There were a few little teeth showing in her mouth.
She began to lift her right hand toward her mouth.
Atlas said she loved to chew on her fingers because she was teething still.
I was far from a father figure but I knew chewing on some sand would not taste good.

“You don’t want to eat the sand, beautiful girl,” I said to Juniper Evelyn.
I touched her hand as she let out a yelling laugh.

“I think she’s in love,” Hazel said.

I looked back at Hazel.

She sat in a beach chair, under an umbrella, reading a book.

Wearing a two-piece bikini, blue with orange flowers in all the right spots.

I mean, how could I not look, right?

After all, Hazel had been pregnant and gave birth... which meant... she put out...

I heard a growl.

A literal growl.

That was Atlas.

Not happy that I was sort of enjoying the sight of Hazel in a bikini.

Atlas stared at me, his eyes throwing fire.

Just to be *Rome*, I puckered my lips and blew him a kiss.

Then I focused on Juniper Evelyn again.

“Let’s get the sandcastle together,” I said to her.

She let out a noise and laughed.

“Sorry, Atlas, but that kid loves Uncle Rome,” Joe said.

“Because he has the same mentality,” Atlas said.

“What does that mean?” Hazel asked.

“Yeah,” I said. “What does that mean?”

“Nice job, Atlas,” Anna threw out.

“I mean, I get it,” I said. “You’re calling your daughter a genius. Because

I'm a genius."

"Yeah, you're something," Atlas said.

"Just ignore them," I said to Juniper Evelyn. "Your old man has no idea what he's talking about."

She just kept smiling at me.

This was what the off-season looked like now for us.

It seemed the days of all-night parties and all-day sleeping in were long gone.

Atlas acted like the big, mean protective bear.

Hazel looked stunning in her bikini, reading a book.

Joe and Anna sat in the sun on a beach towel, subtly touching hands.

Anna wearing a see-through white top that revealed a red bikini.

These women and their bikinis and bodies were driving me nuts.

Then there was Jago and Brea.

They were down in the ocean.

Jago holding Brea in his arms.

Her finger interlocked around his neck.

Staring at each other in a very dangerous and sexual way.

Normally Sebastian and April would have been there with us.

The newlyweds were off on the first of a few honeymoons.

This first one was them flying to a remote cabin somewhere in the mountains of Oregon for a three-night stay.

It didn't seem all that exciting until you thought about it... *you and the person you love in a cabin for days and nights with nothing to do but get naked, be naked, stay naked, explore each other's bodies...*

I was happy for them.

My mind felt certainly active today.

For some reason.

I looked at Juniper Evelyn again.

I leaned down closer to her.

I repacked the bucket with sand and flipped it over and tapped on the bottom of it.

The little one loved that.

She wanted her turn to smack the bucket.

Together it took us about five minutes to build a semi-decent sandcastle.

I then began to dig out a moat with the plan of filling it with water.

Juniper Evelyn had a different plan.

She reached forward and began to knock all the sandy towers over.

“Juniper Evelyn!” Hazel cried out. “Don’t ruin it!”

I glanced at Hazel. “Really?”

“You can’t let her walk all over you,” Hazel smiled.

“Yes, he can,” Atlas said.

“And yes, I will,” I said. “It’s her sandcastle. She can do whatever she wants with it.”

“And you’ll be the one who builds it again for her, huh?” Hazel asked.

“I’m Uncle Rome. Of course I’ll build it again. I’ll sit here all day and night and build sandcastles with her. She needs to know from *day one* that I’ve got her back.”

Hazel swooned.

Atlas looked a little jealous.

“You know, Rome, it’s very strange to see you like this,” Anna said. “This fatherly role right now.”

“Hey, don’t judge me,” I said. “I care. That’s my job. To care and protect.”

“Anna has a point,” Joe said. “This is different. You’re...”

Joe looked at Jago.

“Clingy?” Jago asked.

“Something like clingy,” Joe said.

“What?” I asked.

“You’re extra protective today,” Atlas said. “Is there something we

should know? Something going on?”

“What would be going on in my life?” I yelled.

“Defensive much?” Hazel asked.

“You know what?” I asked. “I don’t need to hear this. I’m going to take my favorite girl in the world down to the ocean. If that’s okay with her parents?”

“Go for it,” Hazel said.

Atlas looked like every muscle in his body flexed at once. “Just be careful, Rome. The ocean... the waves...”

“You’re such a good dad, Atlas,” I said. “But I swear to you, I would never let anything happen to Juniper Evelyn. I’d give my life for her.”

“That’s intense and yet sweet,” Anna said. “You sure nothing is going on in your life?”

I looked at Anna and smiled ear to ear. “Do you really want to know what’s going on in my life? Nobody has asked me about the wedding yet. Anyone notice how I kind of just disappeared? Do you want to know about the two women? What happened all night? What happened the next morning?”

Anna started to blush.

That kind of talk got everyone to shut up for a second.

I stood up and Juniper Evelyn looked at me, ready to cry.

“I’m not leaving you, beautiful girl,” I said.

I picked her up.

I kept her nice and snug, tucked into my right arm and I walked her down toward the water.

I had to admit I was slightly disappointed in myself.

My lying skills were always top notch.

I mean, nobody knew I was married, right?

Today though was different.

Everyone seemed to be calling me out.

Saying I was acting different.

I had no idea what that meant.

I wasn't acting differently.

I was still the same-

From the corner of my eye I saw something fly by.

I turned away to protect Juniper Evelyn and I shot my hand out and knocked a football out of the air.

A shirtless college kid came jogging over.

"Sorry, dude," he said.

"Sorry?" I asked. "I'm holding a baby. Are you an idiot or what? Give me that football right now!"

The kid was shocked, picked up the ball and handed it to me.

I threw it into the ocean.

Then I pointed at him. "You're lucky that football didn't touch me or the baby. Or I would drag you out into the middle of the ocean and hold you there until a shark came to eat you. You got that?"

I walked closer to the water.

Then I realized what I had just done. What I had just said.

I looked at Juniper Evelyn.

"That was a little uncalled for," I said to her. "That was me being too protective. Too fatherly. Right?"

Juniper Evelyn smiled.

And I was pretty sure she nodded.

I stared out to the ocean and wondered what the hell was wrong with me.

There was no way this had anything to do with Emily. Right?

Or her wanting a divorce. Right?

Or her wanting a baby...

Right?

Chapter Eight

EMILY



MY CLASSROOM STOOD empty and silent.

As did the normally bustling hallways of the elementary school.

It had an eerie feel to it.

The memories of the echoes of kids talking, yelling, laughing. Their tiny, screeching voices that had a way of driving you crazy right up until you stood in the empty hallway and you secretly missed it.

But just like every year, the summer and the break would pass by quicker than ever.

In the blink of an eye I'd be back in my classroom, getting ready for another busy school year of teaching.

Just like in the blink of an eye it had been a week since I saw Rome.

Since I saw my husband.

Nothing had happened since.

I hadn't seen, talked, or even texted Rome.

And neither did he.

As though it never happened.

As though I never showed up to his place and chased away some one-night stand clinger, then had coffee and breakfast and talked about my life, how I wanted to get a divorce because that was going to somehow help me get pregnant easier because I believed in all that stuff Ellie believed in.

All the while Rome walked around shirtless.

Shirtless.

So yummy.

I chased those thoughts away and looked at my phone.

I looked down the hallway.

I sighed.

Before I could think of my next step in whatever plan my life had become, I heard a voice call out my name.

There, to my left, came Candice.

Freaking Candice.

Her short, blonde hair dancing perfectly level with her chin.

Wearing casual jeans, a casual buttoned-down shirt, and of course wearing a shirt under that with the school's name and mascot on it.

A bag thrown over her shoulder.

Forever in the middle of a hustle.

And now the two of us competing for a promotion.

I wanted - and damn deserved - to be the head of the early education department for the school. Which would put me right in the heart of the district, with a chance to grow my career and work closely with the district to make decisions.

The best possible decisions for the kids too.

I caught my right hand gently touching my stomach.

... for the kids...

Was it that crazy to just want a promotion, get pregnant, have a baby, and enjoy a good but busy life?

“You look like hell right now,” Candice said to me.

“Oh?”

“Are you sleeping enough? You really should find a schedule that works for you. I know they say get eight hours and all, but some people are built differently. Did you know that one percent of the population can survive off less than five hours of sleep? I’m one of them. I can go twenty hours a day and not get tired. Can you believe that?”

Candice smiled.

She looked like a caricature come to life.

“I want what’s best for the district, the school, and the kids,” I said.

“So do I! We’re the same, Emily. And believe me, I’m not going to forget about you either. I’m not going to just race off into the sunset and leave you behind. In fact, I’ve been thinking about it... we should work together.”

See, Candice came from money.

Her father was some real estate guy and Candice never had to work a day in her life.

She claimed she chose to work, but it was merely things being handed to her.

Now she had her sights set on the school and the district, she wanted to rule it all.

I didn’t like to admit it, but I hated Candice.

“We can be partners in crime,” she said with a goofy-looking smile.

“Right,” I said. “I keep teaching right here. You get the glory.”

“I have the louder voice. That’s just a fact.”

“I’m well prepared for this, Candice.”

“I know you are,” she said. “Did you think I meant...” She gasped. She touched my shoulder. “You’re just as qualified as I am.”

“I’m more qualified.”

“You and your degrees and certifications, right?”

Candice winked.

Sometimes I pictured slapping Candice.

Really hard.

I knew what it would cost me.

My job. My career.

She would definitely press charges.

She'd sue me, the school, and the district.

Sometimes it really felt worth it.

"Oh, by the way, I talked to Gary about some of your ideas," she said.

Gary was Gary Horndorf, the superintendent.

Mr. Horndorf played golf at the same country club as Candice's husband.

I hated that she had a direct line to the guy who made really big decisions...

"Excuse me?" I asked.

"You had those notes from the last meeting," Candice said. "Remember? About curriculum structure? They were very good."

"You stole my notes?"

"Hardly! I told Gary they were yours! He was impressed. He told me I was on to something. Like I just said, we can work together."

I gritted my teeth.

Candice smiled.

I wanted to tear her limb from limb.

But we were scheduled to meet with Mr. Horndorf in two minutes.

Which meant I had to smile and be friendly.

Trust me - the entire time I would be picturing punching Candice in the face.



"TAKE it easy with the wine, Emily."

I stared daggers at Ellie and poured even more into my glass.

"Are you really passing judgement right now?" I asked. "I can drink as

much as I want to. I'm not pregnant. Remember?"

I noted how loud my voice became as I spoke.

I stopped pouring the wine and stared down into my glass.

The room fell completely silent between my best friend and me.

Finally, I whispered, "Sorry."

"No need to be," Ellie said. "Any chance I can talk now?"

I had been ranting and raving about Candice for a good hour.

She had such a conniving way of stealing ideas and thoughts and just...

she was just... *so political about everything...*

I genuinely cared about the district and the schools and the kids.

I had the experience too.

Candice was just good at talking and looking the part.

"How was your day, Ellie?" I asked.

"Oh, we're not done talking about you. I just want my turn to respond."

"Respond? To what?"

"Do you think I'm an idiot, Emily?"

"What? What did I say?"

"How about we back up a little bit, huh? A few days. Maybe a week or so. Anything significant happen then?"

I sipped my wine and felt the guilt soar through my body.

"You never said a word about what happened," Ellie said. "You did go see him, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"You talked to him? You told him...?"

I looked at Ellie. "It was weird. Really weird."

"More weird than marrying him?"

"I should have just called him first. You know? Reached out or something. Made plans."

"That's not how it works and you know it."

"Ellie..."

She waved her hands. “Fine. You don’t want to believe in my stuff, then don’t. Want to be logical? We can do that too. This thing you’re dealing with right now with Candice. It sounds intense.”

“It is intense. She’s a bitch.”

“She’s a horrible bitch. I’ve never met her and I don’t like her. But you have other things to worry about.”

“Like what?”

“Okay, I’ll spell it out carefully for you then. You and Candice are vying for the same job or promotion. She’s ruthless. She’s taken your ideas and passed them off as her own. What makes you think she’s not capable of digging around?”

“Digging around into what?”

“You!” Ellie said as she stood up. “Emily, you have a pretty big secret. You’re married. To a hockey player. To a guy with a not-so-great reputation. I mean, there’s nothing wrong with being married, but to have it as a secret. All this time? You know if Candice finds out about that, she’ll use it against you. She’ll either tell everyone and turn it into some huge scandal... or...”

“What?”

“She’ll blackmail you. Tell you to take your name away from the promotion or else she’ll tell everyone.”

I hated how much sense it made.

Because Candice would absolutely do something like that.

In a heartbeat.

“But if you weren’t with him... you know what I mean? There’s a little bit of sympathy to it all. That you *were* married. You didn’t work out. You control the story.”

“There is no story,” I said. “Or, whatever there is, it’s my business.”

“Maybe you shouldn’t go for this promotion then. I mean, if this is how it’s going to be. Right?”

“And let Candice boss me around like that? Let her win?”

“I don’t like that option either.”

“I refuse that option. Screw her.”

“I’m just saying, it’s a problem. Or it could be a problem. Just... overall.”

“So in my real life, Rome is a problem,” I said. “And then the sense of me getting pregnant... the energy and all that... it’s a bad message.”

“Yes. To both.”

I took a deep breath and sighed.

I hadn’t told Ellie everything about seeing Rome.

The way we just talked like we had seen each other every day prior.

The way he looked... shirtless...

Or his eyes forever staring at me, flirting with me.

He just had a way about himself.

Just like Vegas.

That whole story...

“So I’m screwed,” I said.

“Not screwed. You just have a decision to make.”

“And let me guess, this is the part where you tell me to let the universe make the decision for me?”

That was the exact second my cellphone started to ring.

I saw the look in Ellie’s eyes.

The smile on her face.

“Yeah, okay,” I said.

I glanced down at the screen and let out a gasp.

“Who is it?” Ellie asked, as though she already knew.

It was impossible.

It had to have been.

Rome was calling me.

“Hello?” I answered.

“Hey there, *wife*,” he said.

I looked at Ellie.

“Rome,” I said.

“You know, we never finished our talk from last week,” he said. “It was just all so sudden.”

“Right.”

“I think we should finish that talk.”

“You want to talk.”

“Yeah. Go out. Have a drink. Talk.”

“You want to go out and have a talk,” I said.

Ellie nodded.

She grabbed a notebook and a pen from her bag and wrote down a single word.

KISMET!

I rolled my eyes at her.

She wrote something else.

THIS WAS MEANT TO BE!

“You there, sweetheart?” Rome’s smooth voice asked.

“I’m right here,” I said.

“Okay. Here’s the thing. I need you somewhere else. Meeting up with me.”

Rome had a convincing voice.

My best friend nodded so hard I feared she would pull a muscle in her neck.

I couldn’t stop picturing Rome shirtless.

I could have easily just blamed the wine for my decision.

But screw that.

I’d own it.

I told my husband over the phone I would meet up with him for a drink and to talk.

Chapter Nine

ROME



MY REPUTATION at the local bar scene and strip clubs had me really searching for a place to go where nobody knew me.

And that included the hockey fame too.

Not just the guy who enjoyed to party with women (preferably topless women at that).

My marriage to Emily was indeed the biggest secret in my life, and I intended for it to stay that way.

However.

A night out with my wife?

I had some questions that I needed answers to.

That would determine everything else.

Meaning... *what if my wife wanted to fuck?*

What kind of husband would I be to deny my wife an intense orgasm? Or three?

Hell, for my wife, I'd give her five orgasms.

All before sunrise.

I ended up standing outside a bar with a large shamrock glowing above my head.

According to the handwritten sign on the door, tonight was half price burger night.

There were windows but high up on the wall - and frosted - that entering meant not being seen from the outside.

My wife showed up a few minutes later, slightly jogging toward me, apologizing for being late.

She wasn't late.

There was no set time.

I grabbed Emily's left hand. "Take a deep breath, sweetheart."

"Yeah. Okay."

She was nervous.

Visibly nervous.

I had a million thoughts in my head.

I reached for the door and opened it.

"No idea what this place is," I said to Emily. "Figured we needed to be safe and hide."

She looked up at me and said, "Thank you for that."

I didn't like that comment.

I wasn't sure why...

As we made our way toward an open area at the bar, nobody seemed to give a damn about us.

A few people looked.

Then looked away.

We were just two strangers to them.

I was not used to that at all.

I waited for Emily to grab a seat first before sitting next to her.

A female bartender greeted us not even a second later.

She had really blue eyes but a tired looking face.

She looked as though she lived behind the bar.

I glanced at Emily. "What are you drinking tonight, sweetheart?"

"Whatever you are," Emily threw right back.

That was a dangerous thing to say.

I took it easy on the ordering - to start.

When the bartender came back with two perfectly poured glasses of frosty beer, she looked at me and leaned toward me.

"You look familiar."

"Ut-oh," I said.

"No. I think... my boyfriend watches hockey. Are you one of those guys?"

"Possibly."

"What's your name?"

"Rome," Emily said.

I looked at Emily.

What's my last name, sweetheart?

You should know.

Technically it's your last name too!

"Rome," the bartender said.

"Hey," I said. "I want a low-key kind of night."

"Don't worry about me," the bartender said. "I won't say a thing. I don't do that online social stuff either. I have one of them just to see pictures of my family. I have three sisters spread out across the country. But I'll mention it to my boyfriend when I get home. He'll be jealous. Enjoy your drinks. I'll bring over some menus too. May not look it but I've got the best bar food you'll ever have."

"It's not going to make us sick, is it?" I asked.

"Rome," Emily said. "That was mean."

The bartender laughed. "Depends on how you treat me. The nice ones get the good food. The dickheads get the bad food. Know what I mean?"

I reached into my pocket and took out a fifty and slid it across the bar.

“Keep the drinks coming, deal?” I asked.

“You tip like this and I’ll feed you the food myself,” the bartender said.

She took the money and walked away.

“Wow,” Emily said.

“What?” I asked.

“You really are smooth. With everyone.”

“What do you mean?”

“You just swooned that bartender over.”

“That’s just drinking *one-oh-one*,” I said. “Always make nice with the bartender. Strike up a conversation. Make them laugh. Take care of them. You don’t go out drinking much?”

“Not exactly.”

“So you’re the kind of teacher that goes home after school and... what? You make some dinner? Watch some sitcoms? Grade tests and papers?”

“Are you making fun of me right now?”

“Not at all,” I said. “Just wondering where your sense of fun is at.”

“Did I not get married to you?”

“Good point. But that was... you know... *the Vegas story*...”

“So you lived one time in your life?”

“You think that living requires going out to bars?”

“I didn’t say that.”

“You implied it.”

I inched closer to Emily. “Now, if you want to have some fun, we could hit a strip club later too.”

“I’ll pass.”

“Not a fan of the woman’s physique?”

“Wow.”

“What did I do now?”

Emily shook her head. “So you really are this way all the time then. It

wasn't just for show."

"This is me, sweetheart," I said. "If I could have found a strip club where I wouldn't get recognized, that's where we'd be. Because, you know, I don't want you to be seen with a dirty hockey player like me. It would ruin your clean image."

"How sweet of you to say," Emily said. "The passive attacks on me because I would rather cuddle with a good book instead of a woman with fake breasts."

"I'm sensing a little bit of jealousy."

"Not at all."

"Should I close this tab and we go for a ride? I can show you women with beautiful, natural breasts."

"I'm good right here, Rome. In fact, what are we doing here?"

"Now we're getting to the point. Perfect." I lifted my glass. "How about a toast? To us?"

"Sure," Emily said.

She lifted her glass.

"This is for us, Em. Actually, it's for you. You've done a couple things no other person has ever done."

"Such as?"

"Getting me to marry you," I said. "And then showing up unannounced looking for a divorce. Then storming out, leaving me thinking about you..."

"You've been thinking about me?"

"How could I not? You left me hanging there, Em. And we haven't talked since."

"Okay," she said. "Cheers. I'm going to need a drink or two before we continue this talk."

I nodded.

That was very much doable.

I still had a lot of questions for my wife.

And I hoped the booze would help her answer...



HALF PRICE BURGER night and full price drink night paid dividends.

Two bacon and cheddar burgers and more than a few drinks later, Emily and I were full.

I was buzzed.

She was tipsy.

It really didn't make sense to me how we could just hang out and it felt right.

It felt normal.

Calm.

Like we'd known each other for twenty years.

"Em," I said to her. "I'm going to make sure you get home safely tonight."

"I bet you are. Is that what you tell every woman?"

"No. I'm being honest. You've had too much to drink to safely drive."

"Yeah, duh!"

"I'll take care of it. Just so you know."

"Oh, I get it. You're flirting now. Doing the nice guy routine. You'll make sure I get home safely. Blah..."

"You're my wife," I said. "I have to get you home safely."

"I really don't like how smooth you are."

"I know that, sweetheart. But it's just how I am. You learn to love it. Or not."

"I'd prefer the *or not* column."

"Which brings me to my next topic. We're kind of sneaking around here. For good reason. But I think I can connect the dots. Who's the lucky guy waiting at home for you?"

I did not expect Emily to jump up out of her seat, laughing.

I did not expect her to take a few steps away, gently clap her hands, and slightly bend over, laughing even harder.

I turned. “Something funny?”

“Yeah,” Emily said. “*Lucky guy...*”

“I don’t follow.”

“Rome. There is nobody home waiting for me.”

“How is that possible?”

“It just is.”

“No boyfriend?” I asked.

“No.”

“So that means definitely no fiancé...”

“Not even close.”

“Just a husband,” I said, pointing to myself.

“Just a husband,” Emily said.

I stood up and moved closer to her. “So then...”

“What?”

“Without being too offensive here... what are you doing trying to have a baby? And I mean... never mind. That’s not my business. At all. You already started to explain that before. I take that back.”

I turned and Emily grabbed my arm. “Hey. I know it’s weird. I know just showing up like that was probably the wrong way to handle things.”

“Not at all,” I said as I looked back at her. “I want to ask why you have this sudden urge to get pregnant but I’m not sure if I’m allowed to. And for the record, I do understand what your friend is talking about. Letting the past go. Moving forward.”

“Okay, so I’m not all that crazy then,” she said. “And the baby thing...”

She swallowed hard.

Her voice trailed off.

I took that as my sign to let the subject go.

Emily let my arm go, went back to her seat and finished the rest of her drink.

She ordered another right away.

That's where I drew the mental line for drinks.

I needed to make sure she got home safely.

I approached the bar and Emily looked at me. "Let's do another toast!"

Her words were not very clear.

"Listen to me, sweetheart. I'm going to make sure two people are here for you."

"Oh yeah? A threesome?"

"Wow," I said.

"Sorry," she said. "That just came out. I didn't mean that. I've never done that. I don't know if I would."

"Emily, everything is catching up to you right now. Really quick."

"I know! I'm drunk!"

"Yes. You are. I doubt we're going to have any serious conversation right now."

"You're just delaying our divorce," Emily said.

"Listen to me. I'm having someone take you home. And I'm having someone else take your car home. So when you wake up, everything will be there."

"Oh, and you're just *Mr. Super Nice* now? Not even going to try and hook up with me?"

I sucked in a breath and gritted my teeth.

You think I won't take you home and fuck you right now, sweetheart?

Goddamn, Em, you look stunning and so fuckable right now...

"Need to just get you home I think," I said.

"I can decide my own night and my own fate, thank you very much."

"So let's talk then," I said. "You want a divorce? What's that going to do? You want to have a baby? Go for it. You want me out of your life for

good? Just say it.”

Emily stared at me and slightly smiled.

She didn't respond to me.

The look in her eyes...

And I mean, come on, I was Rome.

I had a reputation to look after.

One I did care about.

No matter how dirty and wild it was.

I inched closer to Emily and hovered my mouth a centimeter from her ear.

I grinned as I whispered...

“Since I am your husband, Em, maybe I should just be the one to get you pregnant.”

Chapter Ten

EMILY



MY EYES POPPED OPEN.

I sat straight up in bed like a vampire coming to life at night.

It was morning.

The sunlight in the room gave that away.

I blinked a few times.

I took a big, deep breath.

I even touched my chest.

Not sure why, but I did.

I passed over the mild yet throbbing headache I had thanks to the drinks last night and went right for the obvious...

I had to pee.

Really bad.

I shuffled to the bathroom.

I drained my bladder, washed my hands, and looked at my reflection.

“Not bad,” I whispered to myself.

I didn't look like the eighth gate of hell, which I figured would happen.

A night out like I had wasn't always the worst.

It was good to cut loose.

The only problem I had with it was that things were way too fuzzy at the end.

The last thing I remembered...

I should be the one to get you pregnant.

I ran out of the bathroom back toward my bed.

I grabbed all the covers and pulled them down, expecting to find a sleeping Rome in my bed.

I balled the covers up and smelled them.

They smelled like sleep.

I tossed them to the bed and took another deep breath.

My head wanted water.

My body wanted coffee.

I compromised and reminded myself that coffee couldn't be made without water.

From my bedroom I hustled my way to the kitchen and set myself up for a quick, delicious, much needed cup of coffee.

Just as I was about to close the lid and press the button for the largest size coffee, I heard a thud behind me.

I spun on my heels and looked at the other bathroom in my condo.

It was right near the front door of the condo.

I heard another noise.

Silently, I gasped.

My eyes moved to the floor. To the tiny space between the floor and the bottom of the door.

I saw movement.

Holy shit, I saw movement!

My jaw dropped and I quickly entered *fight mode*.

I opened a drawer and grabbed the first item I could find.

A red rubber spatula.
I had no choice.
It would have to do.
I slowly began to bend my knees, letting my butt touch my ankles.
In the kitchen, I was cornered.
It felt like a really bad idea.
As I popped back up, I studied the bottom of the bathroom door.
More noise. More movement.
Then I saw the door handle begin to move.
I sucked in a shaky breath.
I lifted the red rubber spatula into the air.
I wasn't sure how much trouble I was about to be in.
It was time to find out.



THE BATHROOM DOOR opened and I let out a weird sounding scream.

It was kind of like a *Yaaa!* noise.

I threw the red rubber spatula like I was at one of those ax throwing places.

Sailing through the air, end over end, I knew the red rubber spatula was going to do nothing to the attacker in my condo.

By the time my eyes and brain linked up again to realize it was just my husband walking out of the bathroom, the red rubber spatula hit Rome.

Well, the rubber part didn't.

The wooden handle did.

Smacking him in the forehead, then diving to the floor.

“Ow!” Rome yelled. “What the hell was that for?”

“What are you doing here?” I yelled back. “You don't live here! You don't belong here! I didn't tell you to...” I looked in the general direction of

my bedroom even though I couldn't see it. "You slept here. You slept with me. I was drunk. You..."

"Can we start over?" Rome asked.

"What does that mean?" I asked.

"That means you stop throwing kitchen utensils at my face."

"It was one spatula. A rubber one."

"Doesn't feel like rubber hit my head," Rome said.

He pointed and I didn't mean to laugh... but I kind of did.

Rome ran back into the bathroom to look at himself in the mirror.

I must have had a good throwing arm, because there was a skinny red mark on his forehead from the wooden part of the spatula.

"What is that thing made out of?" Rome yelled from the bathroom.

I shrugged my shoulder.

I didn't buy cheap stuff.

Suddenly, I felt bad.

My mind instantly thought someone had broken into my condo to hurt me when it was just Rome.

I tried to calm my racing heart as I went to check on Rome.

He stood there, his face in a scowl.

"That'll clear up in a minute," I said about the mark on his head.

"You threw a spatula at me."

"Well, we are married, right?"

"So now it's a joke?"

"Rome... I don't remember much..."

"Let me guess. You never do that kind of thing either?"

"No. Not like that. We were talking and..."

Rome nodded.

He walked around me and out of the bathroom.

"Hey," I said. "You have to tell me what's going on here. Why are you here? How did you get here? How did I get home?"

“I can explain all of that,” Rome said. “Just as long as you do two things.”

“What?”

“Promise you won’t attack me with kitchen utensils.”

“I promise.”

“And you kiss my *boo-boo*.”

“I kiss... what?”

Rome pointed to his forehead. “You kiss my *boo-boo*.”

“Rome, I am not kissing your forehead.”

Like the defiant prick he was, Rome shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

I grabbed his arm.

He turned back.

That cocky look on his face...

I groaned, reached up and grabbed his neck.

I pulled him down, then jumped to my toes.

I planted my lips to his forehead, on the mark left by the handle of the red rubber spatula.

“There,” I said. “Happy?”

“I’d be even happier if you kissed me somewhere else,” Rome said.

“Just tell me about last night. Please.”

“Okay. I arranged for you to get home. I arranged for your car to get home too. Then you changed your mind.”

“I changed my mind? To what?”

“You asked me to come home with you.”

“No, I didn’t.”

“Em, you did.”

Em... okay... swoon...

“You told me to ride home with you ,” Rome said. “So I made even more arrangements. To have someone bring my car here too.”

“Your car is out front right now?” I asked.

“That’s right. You and I were in the back seat of a car. Don’t worry. You just rested your head on my shoulder. You kept repeating yourself, telling me to stay the night. Not to leave. So I promised I would stay.”

“And...?”

Rome touched my shoulders. “Sweetheart, calm down. We did not have sex. Not even close. And even if you said something about it, I would never. You were drunk. You were mumbling and rambling.”

Heat flooded my cheeks.

I nodded.

“I got you home and got you into bed.”

“Where did you sleep?”

“The couch.”

I broke away from Rome and ran into the living room.

There wasn’t any evidence that Rome slept there.

“I’m not lying to you, Em,” he said from behind me. “You wanted to come home and you didn’t want to be alone.”

“Nothing happened.”

“No. Nothing happened. You just kept rambling.”

I touched my forehead. Embarrassment flooded my body. “What did I say?”

“You just kept talking about the baby. *The baby.*”

I cringed. “I’m sorry, Rome. I don’t do things like that. And I mean it. The drinks just hit me all at once.”

“I could tell. I’m surprised you didn’t get sick.”

“I know when to cut myself off. Um, thank you for getting me home. Thank you for being a gentleman.”

“Don’t go blabbing that too loud though. The gentleman thing. I’ve a preferred reputation. I guess with my wife, I just act different. Right?”

I let out a nervous laugh.

Yeah. The marriage thing. We need to talk about that...

“You know, the baby thing... we could talk about it.”

“Talk about what?”

“You’re really going to get pregnant by a stranger?”

“That’s not how it works, Rome.”

“I’m not saying you’re going to have sex with a stranger. But it is stranger semen.”

I shut my eyes.

Stranger semen.

“I know that sounds like a dirty movie,” Rome said.

“Just stop. Rome. Just...”

“Give me a second here, Em. Think about it. We were crazy enough to meet and get married, right?”

I looked at him. “You’re being serious right now. Or better yet. You just want to have sex with me.”

“First off, of course I want to have sex with you. That has nothing to do with the baby thing. Just keep that in mind. I mean... give me the word and I would slowly strip those clothes off your body and then I would-”

“Rome!” I cried out.

My face was red delicious apple red.

“I’m making my point,” he said.

“You’ve made it.”

“Okay. I’m just checking.”

“Rome, think about what you’re saying. What’s more insane than me being married to you? Having your baby!”

“I’m good with insane,” Rome said. “I live to be insane and find insane things to do!”

“This isn’t like adopting a puppy or something.”

“I don’t want a puppy, Em.”

“Right. You want a baby.”

“With you.”

“Rome...”

“You want to get pregnant.”

“You have no idea what you’re talking about right now.”

“You snore loud when you’re drunk so I didn’t sleep much. I had a lot of time to think.”

I gasped.

Embarrassed again.

Before I got a chance to defend myself, my phone dinged loudly, telling me someone was at my front door.

When I checked the doorbell camera, I almost let out a scream.

Of all people to show up unannounced while I stood with my husband...?

My biggest enemy - Candice - stood at my door.

Chapter Eleven

ROME



THERE WAS a moment or two when everything seemed to stop and I had time to think.

I know that I had most of the night to think on Emily's uncomfortable couch while she snored from inside her bedroom, thanks to her ability to use whiskey to cover up the truth.

My wife had some flaws.

Which I didn't mind.

After all - not everyone could be perfect like me.

The thing that was actually on my mind...?

This whole sudden feeling when it came to Emily having a baby.

She was the one who started it by showing up unannounced, wanting a divorce. Convinced that by us signing some papers it would suddenly make her ovaries and uterus - *and whatever else inside her that needed to work to make a baby* - would suddenly kick into overdrive and she'd turn into a baby factory, as though her vagina was a conveyer belt in a candy factory.

She still needs the dude juice!

That's right.

To put it bluntly...

Emily needs cum.

Semen.

Manly fluid.

Baby batter.

Jizz...

Whatever anyone wanted to call it.

As my thoughts ran faster and faster, Emily shut her door and spun around.

She threw her back against the door and looked right at me.

“Are you guilty of something?” I asked. “Do you have a man out there, sweetheart? After all the hell you gave me about my one-night stand...”

“First of all,” she said in a growling whisper. “I did not give you hell about your clingy one-night stand, okay? Second of all, there’s a woman out there.”

“So? Nothing wrong with enjoying men and women, right?”

“Can you get your mind out of the gutter for a second, Rome?”

The person outside the door knocked.

Again and again.

“Em, who is it?” I asked. “Is it a debt collector or something? Did you gamble with money you didn’t have and they’re here to break your arms? I can help out.”

I took a step toward Emily and she pointed at me. “You stay away from me and keep your mouth shut.”

Emily spun back around. “Candice, this isn’t a good time!”

“You already opened the door! What’s going on? Are you in danger?”

Emily sighed and put her head to the door.

I heard her whisper to herself, “*Please don’t let Rome fuck this up...*”

That seemed a little silly to me.

Anyone who knew me knew how good I was at fucking things up.



EMILY OPENED THE DOOR. “Candice, this is not a good time. Really.”

I saw this Candice person and instantly had her figured out.

The hair. The clothes. The look on her face.

I knew this woman had something to do with the school Emily worked at.

And probably not in a good way.

“I wanted to talk about...”

Candice stopped.

She looked right at me.

Our eyes locked.

Also. You haven't had a cock in you in a long time. And even then... the last time... it was a cheap two pump hump... you poor thing. You're a bitch because you haven't had an orgasm since before social media became popular.

“Who is this?” Candice asked.

So bold.

“I'm Rome,” I called out. “I'm Emily's-”

“Electrician!” Emily blurted out. “That's right. He's the electrician. That's why I said this is a bad time, Candice. He's here working on my condo.”

Nothing bothered me.

Ever.

Except this... for some reason.

I still couldn't figure it out.

Emily and I had been secretly married for a while now.

It shouldn't have mattered that she lied about who I was.

What was the big deal, right?

Saying I was her husband would just lead to a lot of questions.

And. hey. Emily was a schoolteacher.

To have a crazy Vegas story that ended with her marrying a hockey player...?

Aside from that, the baby thing.

Again!

On my mind!

Why can't I let this go?

It's like a surge of masculinity and all that hit me and kept getting worse by the second.

Picturing Emily with another guy... just for his semen...

Or getting procedures done...

Do they actually use a turkey baster to, you know, put the stuff up there?

I couldn't believe what went through me...

“What issues are you having?” Candice asked. “No offense to this guy, but my brother-in-law is a master electrician. He makes a lot of money but he always helps me out for free. I’m sure I can give him a call. Get you a discount.”

“Candice, please don’t say that stuff in front of Rome,” Emily said.

“I have thick skin,” I said.

“You know, it could be the building itself,” Candice said, ignoring me. “These places are built so fast and so cheap. Then they charge a fortune. I probably should have warned you. There are rumors about the builders here...”

Candice looked around and grimaced.

Judgmental.

What a sad excuse for a person...

Emily glanced at me. “Sorry for the interruption. You can get back to work now. Please.”

“Oh. Of course. I’ll go take a look in the bedroom. Check the connection

rods.”

“The connection rods?” Candice asked.

“Your brother-in-law is a master electrician and you never heard of connection rods? Don’t you even know where electricity comes from?”

I turned and walked toward Emily’s bedroom.

I knew she was pissed at me for that.

She wanted to scream and not let me go in there... but she didn’t have much of a choice...

It wasn’t like I was going to do much snooping.

Plus, I had been in the bedroom already.

When I basically carried her to bed just hours ago.

The room had a cozy smell to it.

And something like a warm floral scent.

Like good shampoo.

My eyes scanned the room, stopping right where I wanted to have a little fun next.

Emily’s dresser.

I had to find something naughty in there.

Maybe some lacy panties.

Maybe some tiny thongs.

Maybe even some toys.

Well, those would probably be in the nightstand drawer.

I changed course and went there first.

I opened the nightstand drawer and found nothing.

At least nothing fun.

Two phone chargers and some hair ties.

Which told me this wasn’t the correct nightstand drawer.

I made it a couple steps before Emily came barging into her bedroom.

“What is wrong with you?” she growled at me in a whisper.

“What?” I whispered back. “How about what’s wrong with you? Huh?”

Throwing me under the bus like that? An electrician?"

"I didn't know what else to say. You have no idea who Candice is. What she's capable of. Of all people..."

"What do you want me to do then?"

"Stay out of my drawers to start."

"Oh, I can't be curious about your choice of panties?"

Emily's eyes widened.

She glanced over her shoulder for a second.

Then she said, "Here..."

To my surprise she pushed the front of her pants down and turned a little, showing off the panties that nestled so perfectly close to her body.

She picked up her pants and I hurried after her.

"Don't stop there, Em," I said as I touched the lower part of her back.

She covered her mouth from letting out a yelp.

Her body collided into mine.

"Hey, Emily?" Candice's voice called out. "Can I trouble you for a drink?"

Emily pushed at me.

I stepped back and then dropped down to one knee.

Candice was suddenly right there.

"Give me one second," Emily said to Candice. "Rome was just explaining something to me."

"Well, yeah, as I was saying..." I cleared my throat. "The main friction wire connection... if it gets loose or, you know, you just want a good connection..."

"Are you sure about this guy?" I heard Candice whisper to Emily.

"What would you like to drink, Candice?" Emily asked. "Water? Tea? Coffee?"

"How about a beer?" I called out.

"It's morning," Candice said to me. "Do you drink on the job?"

“Only on days that end in Y,” I said without hesitation.

Candice gasped.

Emily looked mortified.

She hustled Candice to the kitchen and got her a bottle of water.

I casually followed along.

I needed an exit plan and I needed it quick.

I traded places with Emily in the kitchen.

I spotted a light switch next to the sink.

“Okay, here we go,” I said. “The big reveal. To see how good I am or not.

As long as the light turns on above the sink...”

I smiled big - cocky confidence at its best - and I flicked the switch up.

The light above the kitchen sink did not turn on.

The garbage disposal did.

Hearing that sudden growling noise scared the hell out of me.

I jumped up and threw a punch at the air.

Emily let out a gasp.

Candice looked worried.

I quickly turned off the switch and smiled. “Just kidding. That was the garbage disposal. But, hey, it has power. Right?”

“Yes,” Emily said. “It does have power. Thank you so much for stopping by.”

Her eyes moved toward the door.

She was just going to kick me out now.

“Can I talk to you about the invoice?” I asked.

“Yes,” Emily said.

She walked to the door and opened it.

I gave a nod to Candice.

She seemed scared of me.

Emily and I stepped outside and she pulled the door shut.

“You have to leave,” she whispered.

“We aren’t done talking about the baby thing,” I whispered back.

“What? You can’t be serious, Rome.”

“What if I am? Give me a chance to talk it through, Em. Don’t just assume things about me. You hardly know me.”

“Oh, I know enough.”

“Yeah? Well, if I’m crazy enough to get married to you the night we met, why wouldn’t I be crazy enough to put a baby in you?”

Emily’s jaw dropped.

She didn’t say anything else.

She went back inside.

I had nothing else to say for now.

I walked out of the building with a big smile on my face.

Then I realized something.

This was by far the hardest I had ever worked to have sex with someone.

Chapter Twelve

EMILY



IN THE FEW seconds it took me to get Rome to actually leave for good, Candice had wandered over to the front window.

I couldn't believe she showed up like this.

And the timing couldn't have been worse.

With Rome in my place.

Me after a night of whiskey drinking.

With the backdrop of the biggest secret of my life - *I'm married!*

Ellie's words rang clear in my head.

For sure Candice would love to get her hands on that kind of gossip and use it against me.

Which meant I had to play a little calmer, a little nicer, and get her out of my condo.

"Wow," Candice said. "That's your electrician?"

"He's unconventional," I said. "But reliable. Needed him here first thing this morning and he-"

"You see the car he's driving?" Candice asked. She looked back at me.

“You know how much that car costs?”

“I don’t know anything about cars.”

“I know enough to know that is a very expensive car. Probably close to a hundred grand! For a car! And better yet, why would an electrician show up in a car? Doesn’t he have a work truck? Or van? Where are his supplies and tools?”

“I guess they were in the car,” I said. “I don’t know. Why does any of this matter to you, Candice? Better yet, what are you doing here? I’m not exactly a fan of the pop in visit.”

“You know what I think?” Candice asked with a smirk.

“No, I don’t want to know.”

“I think you were sleeping with that man. Was that a one-night stand?”

I let out a loud laugh. “Yup. You caught me. He fucked my brains out all night long. Please. Give me a break, Candice. Look at me. Do I look like I just had sex?”

Okay, finally, the truth is on my side here!

Take that, Candice!

I did not have sex last night.

Rome did not sleep with me.

No lies told there.

“Well, if I’m being honest, you look like you haven’t had sex in a long time,” Candice said. “But, ew, why are we talking about this subject?”

“You brought it up.”

“You had a man like that here.”

“He’s an electrician,” I lied. “I was having issues with my kitchen.”

“Then why was he in the bedroom?”

I rolled my eyes. “If your brother-in-law really is a master electrician, then you should know about electrical circuits.”

“Oh,” Candice said. “Well, yeah. Of course I know about electrical circuits.”

“Then this topic is done and over with. I don’t know why he drives a car like that. I called him as an emergency. Maybe he was out doing something. He was in his car and drove over. Why do I care? He fixed what I needed to be fixed. It still doesn’t explain why you’re here.”

Candice strutted right by me.

Through my condo.

As though she owned the place.

The smell of her perfume, clothes, makeup and hair...

Her scent moving around the place I called *home*.

On top of that, I hadn’t even had a chance to take in how much like crap I looked at that moment either.

Candice dressed for the day, looking her best.

Me looking tired and slightly hungover.

Not exactly the kind of image I wanted to personally project as I vied for a promotion at school.

Damn you, Rome.

Just... damn you...

Candice picked her bottle of water up off the counter and took a sip.

She smacked her lips together and then studied the bottle.

“What is it?” I asked.

“I just have a taste for water,” Candice said. “I get made fun of for it. But you can taste good water and bad.”

“And that’s bad water?”

“Did you know it’s preferred to drink water filtered by reverse osmosis? Much better quality and taste. I mean, after all, why even buy water if it’s going to be bad. Right?”

I really enjoyed Candice’s backhanded attacks.

I wasn’t going to stand there and debate water quality with her.

That was for damn sure.

“If you don’t like the water... go get it from somewhere else...”

“Someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed,” Candice said.

I saw the way her eyes looked at my hair.

I screamed in my head not to touch my hair.

But I did anyway.

Smoothing out bed head that would just jump right back to where it was.

“Candice.”

“Yes, fine. I know. You want to know why I’m here. Why I just showed up without so much as a quick text. For starters, I didn’t think you’d be asleep.”

“I was not asleep.”

“I mean, I know personally for me, I’m up and ready early. Even on the weekends. Especially with this promotion coming up. There’s not much time to rest. I hope you understand that.”

“You showed up to lecture me?”

“Of course not! A little friendly advice isn’t a bad thing, is it?”

“I have a busy day ahead,” I said.

“Right. I’ll get to the point. I was thinking about the promotion. I think this should be done in fairness. Don’t you?”

“Fairness.”

“What I mean by that... I hate anything that isn’t real. You know that political kind of back and forth stuff. That’s not me.”

I laughed loudly inside my head.

“So I was wondering if we could be seen together. Working together. You know what I mean? So this doesn’t turn into something silly. Just think about it for the sake of the school. The kids. The district. Right? Also, think about it this way...” Candice inched closer to me. “Picture after the decision is made. Life goes back to normal for you. You and I will still have to work with each other. Still work close together to get things done.”

“Wait a second...”

“Let me finish,” Candice said. “I really want you to picture this. We have

a chance to actually make things change in the school. And maybe even the district. You have great ideas. And I have a very big voice.”

Candice let out a belly laugh. As though she expected me to laugh alongside her.

I wasn't laughing, nor was I going to, at all.

Not unless I smacked her in the face.

Now that would have made me laugh for sure.

Because the way she kept talking to me...

“I know what you're thinking,” Candice said. “I get it. You think I'm trying to be mean or manipulate you. I'm really not. I'm just painting the clearest picture I can. It really is what's best for both of us, Emily. You're so good at teaching. You're meant to be a teacher. I think we both know that. Heck, I'll even openly admit that you're better than me.”

“But you're not-”

“I already openly admitted that,” Candice said. “If we end up taking this all the way, we'll have to complete several exhausting interviews. Being asked so many questions too.

“Scenarios and all that. See, I've been through this before. I know how to navigate these waters. I guess I'm just trying to be a friend. I only want what's best for you. And me.”

“And you,” I said. “That's really thoughtful, Candice. You came all the way here for this conversation.”

“I sense some tension here and I don't like it. I thought if I could just catch you off guard. No pressure. No school. You know? Just you and me. Maybe have a cup of coffee...?”

“I don't know about that. My water for my coffee isn't reverse osmosis.”

“Are you making fun of me?”

“Nope.”

“I don't appreciate being talked to like this.”

“The same way I don't appreciate you showing up to my house, then

trying to convince me to drop out of this promotion.”

“Drop out? I never said that!”

“Candice, don’t play that game. You’re trying to scare me away.”

“Emily, no. I swear. Look at me. I swear!”

“Then don’t talk about it.”

“Don’t get nasty now.”

“It’s my house. I can get however I want.”

“Well, this is troubling. I don’t like this attitude, Emily.”

“Excuse me?”

“Do you think you can always just get your way? See, you’re proving my point. I say one thing you don’t agree with and this is how you act. How would you ever handle the promotion? You can’t just battle everyone. It’s not good.”

“I can’t believe you’re standing in my house acting like this. I think it’s time for you to go.”

“You’re going to kick me out now?”

“I’m kicking you out, Candice.”

“Emily, I thought we could talk this through. Make sense of this whole thing. You know I’m going to get this promotion, right? You have no chance at it. I’m saving you from embarrassment. Total embarrassment. Okay? And I don’t want this embarrassment to bleed into your job either. Next thing you know, you’ve lost the promotion and your job. Is that what you want?”

“Are you threatening me right now?”

“I would never threaten someone, Emily. You know what? I think you’re right. I think I should just go. I hope you have a good rest of your day.”

Just to be the bitch she was, Candice gently placed the water bottle I gave her down on the counter before leaving.

Nothing about me was good enough for her.

Not that it mattered.

But... it did bother me.

I watched her leave and stood there for a second or two before slapping my hand against the water bottle, sending it flying across the kitchen.

Of course I had to go get the water bottle off the floor.

I walked around my condo and watered some of the houseplants I had, then tossed the empty bottle into the recycling.

One thing Candice knew how to do was get people fired up.

She did it so perfectly and without care.

She thrived off it.

Telling me I'm not good for the job?

I'm a great damn teacher.

I know what it's like being in a classroom.

I know the issues and I know how to fix them!

Being all worked up...

There were a few passing seconds when I wished Rome was still here.

Honestly, why not?

If he was here and I was this worked up, then he could put himself to good use for once.

Throw me to the bed and go down on me?

I could let the frustration come from my body... literally.

Or he could just hold me and fuck me until I was either no longer aggravated or no longer able to think straight.

I made sure to chase all those thoughts away and hurried to my bedroom to get changed.

I put on running shorts, a sports bra, and a hoodie.

I tied my running shoes tight and hurried to go for a run.

The last thing I needed to do now was think about Rome.

In fact, I told myself there was no way I was going to go near Rome ever again.

Chapter Thirteen

ROME



CAN you believe I tracked how many days it had been since I saw my wife last?

All of a sudden I had these little pings throughout my body, wanting to call Emily. Wanting to text her. Wanting to see her.

I even considered getting myself a tool belt and showing up shirtless - as a joke - to keep the whole electrician story going.

I also figured that would get her juices flowing and dripping, then next thing you know, boom, we're making a baby.

There was that!

That freaking word.

Baby.

I myself had no interest in being a father.

I wasn't out to become some family man like Atlas.

Don't get me wrong, Atlas and Hazel were great together. Little Juniper Evelyn was the cutest kid I ever saw in my life.

But one thing that made her that?

The ability to hand her back to her parents and the ability to walk away and go live my life however I wanted.

For example, that day at the beach.

I hung out with little Juniper Evelyn.

Building sandcastles and splashing in the water.

But when it came time to change a diaper or deal with her getting cranky because she wanted to go home... *Uncle Rome* handed her off to Mom and Dad and that was that.

Yet for some damn reason I couldn't stop thinking about tossing a baby into Emily's womb.

Was it for the sex?

Duh! Of course it was for the sex!

But it was for more than that too.

Without asking too many personal questions... there was something going on in her life.

She was single.

She wanted a baby.

I wasn't sure if she was having trouble getting pregnant.

Or maybe I did know that, since she showed up to my place unannounced wanting a divorce because her best friend told her to get rid of her past to help her get pregnant...

It wasn't like me to want to know more.

I normally would have just preferred Emily naked.

Telling me stories with her body.

Her legs spread.

Her sweet, tender, glistening...

I felt a sharp pain in my left shoulder.

Then I went off my feet.

"Whoa, you okay?" Henry's voice asked as he wrapped his arms around me.

His breath touched my cheek.

“What the hell?” I yelled.

Henry let me go and started to laugh.

To my left, Atlas stood towering over me.

“Wake the fuck up,” he said.

“Give the guy a break,” Jago called out. “He’s the only one left. He doesn’t have me to help him with women.”

“What the hell does that mean?” I asked.

“Please,” Jago said. “I was your wingman. I did everything for you. I’d get them wet for you, Rome. Just admit it.”

“Fuck you, dude,” I said.

“Did he hear anything we said?” Sebastian asked.

“Who?” I asked.

“You,” Joe said. “You should have been paying attention.”

Joe let out an evil chuckle.

I wanted to know what was actually going on.

We were supposed to be having a meeting.

I figured to talk about the upcoming season, checking on each other.

Coach Denny suddenly appeared, hands on his hips, a scowl on his face.

“Did you make a decision?” he asked.

A split second later, everyone pointed to me.

“Rome?” Coach Denny asked. “Are you serious? I have to call Ellen and tell her... Rome...”

“What?” I asked. “What did I do now? What’s going on?”

Henry moved closer to me and put an arm around me. “Sorry, brother. You were in some kind of post-sex haze there...”

My jaw tightened.

I didn’t have the nerve to tell the guys that I hadn’t had sex since Sebastian’s wedding.

That was... weeks... ago...

Sebastian was already back from his honeymoon.

The glow on his face, enjoying the newlywed life and all that constant sex.

I never got sex when I got married.

Even that felt so ironic for myself and my life.

A guy who enjoyed women... I got married and didn't have sex with the woman I married...

"You'll do fine," Henry said. "Just smile big."

"Smile for what?" I asked.

"What the hell is wrong with him?" Joe growled.

"Are you drunk?" Atlas asked.

"Not even close."

"Smell his breath," Jago said.

"I'm not smelling anything on Rome," Sebastian said. "I would then need antibiotics."

"Can someone tell me what's going on?" I asked.

Henry pulled me closer to him. "You've been volunteered... to represent the team... at a charity event."

"To do what?" I yelled.

Everyone in the room started to laugh at me, Coach Denny included.

What the hell had I missed while daydreaming about getting Emily pregnant?



ELLEN VERWERT GRABBED a metal folding chair and opened it.

She then sat down right across from me.

Sweat dripped down my forehead.

I reached for a towel and wiped my face.

Ellen was a billionaire.

She owned the *SOLA Empire*.

And here she was, sitting in a sweaty and gross gym.

The smell of old metal, fresh sweat, and dirty men.

“I heard there was a vote earlier,” she said with a smirk.

“So Coach Denny called you.”

“He did. He said you told him to call me.”

“I don’t have your number.”

“Do you want me to give you my number?”

I smirked. “Do you want my number? A guy like me?”

Ellen laughed. “Oh, I get it. You’re the sexy bad boy. You think you can get close enough to fuck me, huh? Now that would be a prize. Fucking the owner of the hockey team.”

I lifted an eyebrow.

Ellen was rich and bold.

Very bold.

When she set her sights on someone...

“I think we all know there are better people to represent the team,” I said. “Atlas? He has Hazel. And they have a daughter. Sebastian just got married. Jago is married. Joe is with a freaking doctor. Even Henry. He’s single, but he’s way more presentable than I am.”

“I told Denny to find someone,” Ellen said. “The team apparently voted you.”

“And this has to do with a children’s hospital?”

Ellen nodded. “That’s right. You know my husband and I are very big on philanthropy, charity and all that. Does the attention serve us well? Of course it does. But we do enjoy helping out when we can.”

“So then why not keep quiet and cut a check for a hundred million, then call it a day?” I asked.

“That’s not how it works,” Ellen said.

“Right. You want your interests served. That’s bullshit. No offense.”

I stood up and started to walk away.

“You know, it takes a lot of balls to walk away from me,” Ellen called out. “I am the one who signs your paychecks and all.”

“That doesn’t worry me,” I said.

“You’re going to show up to this event, Rome. There’s no choice. This is for the team and for the hospital. These kids are hockey fans. They know and love you.”

I turned. “What?”

“Atlas and Joe are terrifying. Jago is behind a mask all the time. Henry is too serious. Sebastian is the leader, but he’s the tough, serious leader. You’re the goofball.”

“*Goofball?*” I asked. “I’ve been called a lot of names in my life...”

Ellen stood up, folded the metal folding chair and leaned it against a dirty, stone wall.

“We’re not going into a hospital to be serious and sad,” Ellen said. “We’re lifting the spirits of these kids.”

“Yeah. And you want me to do what? Cartwheels down the hallway? Smack my head off a wall? Tell some dumb jokes?”

“Just be Rome,” she said.

“I’m not sure you want that either.”

I walked away again.

This time, I didn’t stop.

I went right into the men’s locker room at the gym.

One thing I messed up on?

I forgot how bold Ellen truly was.

She followed me into the locker room like it was nothing.

Two guys came walking out of the showers, towels around their necks, cocks bouncing in the wind.

They both froze when they saw Ellen and covered themselves up.

I turned. “You’re insane.”

“I can do what I want. I own this building.”

“You’re going to follow me and threaten me?”

“I’m not threatening you. I’m ordering you.”

“I don’t take orders. Not unless the woman is naked.”

“Are you threatening me now?” Ellen asked with a smile.

“Never.”

“Then you’ll be there.”

I sighed. “Can I have some details?”

“Sure,” Ellen said. “Should we talk somewhere more private? I haven’t seen this much bare cock since my bachelorette party.”

Now that made me laugh.

I opened the locker room door and held it for Ellen and we walked back into the gym area.

We found a cozy and quiet corner to talk.

Ellen spoke differently.

She went from casual and slightly dirty to much more professional talk.

She took out her phone and showed me information about the hospital, the children, and what the itinerary was for the charity event.

On top of that, I had to look good.

No casual clothing.

I did talk her into letting me wear jeans.

Nice jeans. No rips, tears or holes.

Jeans that fit properly.

And a nice button-down shirt too.

I would easily stand out at the event in a mix of people dressed up in suits and ties and all that.

I gave Ellen credit for not fighting me on it.

She knew I wasn’t a fan of showing up to hockey games properly dressed up.

But I did it out of respect for the team, the league, and the sport itself.

Ellen finally tucked her phone away and looked me dead in the eyes.

“One more thing,” she said.

“What?”

“Bring a date.”

“Excuse me?”

“It would look better if you had a date with you.”

“Better?”

“That’s right. You’re a good looking guy, Rome. You can find a date in no time.”

“I didn’t say I couldn’t.”

“Oh, that reminds me... a couple ground rules there.”

“For?”

“Your date. No prostitutes. No escorts. No strippers.”

I ran a hand through my hair. “Well, you just took out my entire contact list, Ellen. Hey, are you free that night?”

Ellen smiled. “My rich husband with security guards three times your size and the ability to make a body disappear in a second might have something to say against that. Don’t mess around. Don’t be a fucking idiot either.”

That was the end of the conversation.

Ellen walked away.

I took a deep breath.

Normally I would have been really irritated by the entire exchange.

Being told what to do. When. How to dress. Where to show up.

That wasn’t my style at all.

Oh, and telling me not to call escorts and strippers?

That was like telling me not to breathe.

However, in this instance, I could handle it.

In fact, I agreed with Ellen’s rules.

No prostitutes. No escorts. No strippers.

That really narrowed it right down to the only person I could call...

My wife.

Chapter Fourteen

EMILY



LOOK SEXY, *but not too sexy.*

I would say look pretty, but you always look pretty.

Hope that made you blush.

Between your legs.

Remember, this is for charity.

Don't go all slutty on me.

Save that for after the event.

Oh, that means you should definitely wear something slutty under the dress.

I'm thinking... a red thong? Maybe even something thin laced. See through a little.

You pick.

I must have read the message from Rome two hundred times.

And that was after I agreed to go with him.

I only agreed because of one simple line he threw at me that made it all make perfect sense.

It'll. Look. Good. For. You.

Ellie showed up just as I put on my black dress.

It was something nice, a touch of casual to it, and far from revealing and provocative at all.

As far as my panties went?

If Rome were to have the chance to see what was under the dress - *which was not something being offered* - he would end up disappointed.

I wore black panties that covered plenty.

No offense to Rome, but I did not want something skinny like dental floss rubbing against my butt hole the entire night.

“Where are you?” Ellie called out.

“Bathroom!”

The door swung open and Ellie had her hands on her hips.

I turned. “Zip me?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“We need to talk about this, Emily. This whole damn thing. Right now.”

“I don’t have time to talk. I have to leave.”

Ellie folded her arms.

She pouted.

Her version of shutting down until she got what she wanted.

I let out a sigh of defeat. “Fine. What?”

“I can’t figure you out, Emily. And you’re my best friend. I never not know what’s going on with you.”

“You know this looks good for me, right?”

“Oh?”

“Two nights ago there was a baseball banquet. Candice spoke at it. She got right up on stage, gave a little speech, bragged about herself, the whole thing. Pictures were taken. She’s boosting herself. Now I hate those kinds of games and things. But this will look really good for me. I cringe saying that.

And to be fair and honest, after Rome invited me, I went online and donated to the charity and the hospital itself. Just so this isn't some crappy looking self-interest thing."

"Which it is," Ellie said. "There is zero reason for you to go. You just want to go."

"Is that a bad thing? A night out? With Rome? I get to dress up a little. I get to do something that matters to me. I'm a schoolteacher, Ellie. I work with kids. I've always wanted to do more and I never did. Maybe this is my chance to pursue it. To push forward with it."

"Then tell me it has nothing to do with the fact that your husband is a smoking-hot, sexy hockey player and you get a chance to be near him again?"

"I wouldn't lie to you."

"And that's the problem."

"It's a problem that I won't lie to my best friend? Do you want me to lie to you?"

Ellie groaned and walked away.

I chased after her, my right hand holding the front of my dress in place.

Someone needs to zip me up!

"Ellie! What's wrong?"

Ellie dug her heels into the floor and spun right around.

"This is why you can't get pregnant, Emily! You need to decide what the hell you're doing. I'm sorry. I don't meant to get upset. I just care about you. I want you to be happy. If you want a baby, I want you to have a baby."

"And what if for tonight I just want to wear a dress, be near Rome, and help out with a charity? For a good cause. And, yes, make me vomit in my mouth... it doesn't benefit me personally. Ew. I know."

Ellie sighed. "Turn around so I can zip you up."

I turned and lifted my hair.

Ellie zipped my dress, then took my hair and clipped it into a messy yet

stylish looking bun type thing.

Not that I was one to praise myself, but I looked really good.

And I felt really good too.

“Emily, I didn’t mean to snap and be mean,” Ellie said.

“You don’t have to apologize.”

“I just need you to know you’re sending out mixed signals. I hate mixed signals.”

“I know you do. And I promise, my plans haven’t changed. I’m just...”

I shrugged my shoulders.

I didn’t know what to say.

I didn’t know how to speak whatever truth I felt.

And once again, Rome had perfect timing.

He texted me he was waiting out front.

I kissed Ellie on the cheek and hurried out of my condo, feeling beautiful, smiling...

... ready for an unexpected night out with my husband.



ROME HAD A PRIVATE CAR.

Rome looked delicious in faded dark blue jeans and a black button-down shirt.

His face a little scruffy and his hair messy.

His smile made my toes curl.

And no matter how hard I tried to tell myself to get away from him, from this night and this moment, I just went along with it.

In the car, we had a drink.

A toast to the night.

When we arrived at the charity event, I felt like a celebrity.

Rome with his hand at the small of my back, the two of us walking side by

side into the fancy event.

Our picture being taken over and over.

More drinks quickly served.

Appetizers being walked around.

I was introduced to the owner of the hockey team.

The billionaire couple of Ellen and Oscar Verwert.

There were other names thrown out that I didn't remember.

Even for Rome himself, he was introduced to many people he didn't know.

Not for one second did his right hand leave my body.

From the small of my back to around my right hip.

Fingers curling and giving me a tug every now and again, making sure I wasn't just right next to him, but right against him.

We had to always touch.

I wasn't sure if that was him flirting. Or him being nice to me and letting me know he wasn't going to ditch me. Or if it was him showing off maybe a little of his own anxiety at being at such an event.

It was all luxurious and over the top.

Rich people gathered together to talk about their money and donate some of it to a good cause.

Then came the part to talk about the hospital.

The CEO of the hospital gave a heartwarming speech.

Ellen Verwert gave a speech too.

Then she called Rome up on stage.

We were seated at a table near a wall, sipping champagne and smiling.

As soon as Ellen said his name, Rome looked at me.

He looked at me like he needed help.

For a second I almost considered faking passing out to draw the attention off the stage and to me.

Rome could then pick me up and carry me out.

Only I froze in place.

I didn't know what to do.

Rome stood, then leaned toward me. "This was not part of the night, Em. Don't move an inch."

The scruff on his face touched my cheek.

My toes curled.

I was falling way too much in love with this moment.

I had to remind myself of a few things.

That Rome wasn't some committed husband or man in love.

That Rome and I met, had a wild night and ended up married.

Not by accident... but really not by choice either.

I reminded myself that most of what was happening between he and I was fake.

Staged.

Part of a show or some kind of image.

Even still, that didn't refrain me from staring at his ass in his jeans as he walked to the stage.

Once up on stage, Ellen had a group of kids come out to greet Rome.

They were all wearing his hockey jersey.

Each kid fighting an illness of their own.

Rome dropped right down to one knee and began to talk to the kids, one by one, greeting them with handshakes, fist bumps, and hugs.

Tears flowed on stage and off.

I caught myself with a lump in my throat the size of a car.

Seeing Rome up there with the kids...

I finished my champagne and then grabbed Rome's.

I finished his too.

A few minutes later Rome walked back to the table.

He was a rock star now.

Nodding at everyone.

Shaking a few hands.

Looking tall and proud.

I ended up clapping for him as he sat down, smiling ear to ear.

I felt proud of him.

Which made no sense.

“Where’s my drink?” Rome asked.

“I drank it,” I said. “Sorry.”

Rome looked around and a waiter rushed over with more champagne.

We both took a sip and he started to laugh.

“What?” I asked.

“It’s a little funny when you think about it. I told you this was good for you. For your image. For this promotion thing. But you do realize that Candice woman thinks I’m your electrician.”

That should have sent chills up and down my body.

Instead, I burst into a fit of laughter.

Laughing so hard, Rome put his arm around me and pulled me close.

“It’s not that funny, Em,” he said.

“Oh, it is. Candice is a cunt.”

“Whoa,” Rome said. “Did you really just say *that* word?”

“I did. And it’s true. And this is hilarious. We’re married and nobody knows it. I’m trying to look good for a promotion. You needed someone who wasn’t a stripper to be your date. This is a mess. I guess I’ll tell Candice that I was indeed screwing the electrician, huh?”

“Why lie to her?” Rome asked.

“Funny. Nice try.”

“Worth a shot,” he said.

I laughed again and then caught my breath. “Sorry. The whole thing just caught up to me in that moment. On top of that, I had Ellie pissed at me.”

“Why’s that, sweetheart?”

I looked at Rome. “Because of you.”

“I tend to piss off a lot of people.”

“Yeah, well, she’s mad because if I want a baby, she thinks I need to stay away from you.”

“And yet I feel the opposite is true,” Rome grinned.

“Oh?” I asked.

The word *flirty* sudden poured through my body.

Rome leaned closer to me.

Inches from me.

His lips near mine.

His eyes burning into mine.

“My offer stills stand, Em,” he whispered. “I’ll put a baby in you.”

I had no idea what came over me.

No hesitation.

I couldn’t believe what I replied with.

“*Then do it.*”

Chapter Fifteen

ROME



TO SIT through the rest of the charity event knowing the intentions on my wife's mind were of me inside her...

To stand and see her glancing at me, smirking, sometimes using her tongue to flirt with a little, tiny straw in a mixed drink...

To have to mingle with people and make small talk, laugh at dumb jokes and make dumb jokes of my own, while the entire time the tip of my tongue tingled and wondered just what did my wife's tender, pearly clit taste like...

Torture?

That wasn't good enough of a word.

Whether she meant it or not, Emily had become the most seductive woman I had ever met in my life.

Gone was my routine of flirting, swooning and guiding the way of orgasms all night long.

In its place was this barrier - the charity event - and Emily just looking the way she did.

She didn't need to sway her hips to make it known she had hips worth

holding onto. She didn't need deep-cut cleavage to let the imagination run wild. She didn't need anything luxurious or fancy...

When it was time to leave, I gave Ellen a hug.

She told me I did great and she appreciated me being there.

I had no response to anything or anyone.

I grabbed my wife's hand and pulled her out of there.

I slipped my right hand around her waist and pulled her close as we walked to the waiting car.

Once we were in the back seat...

The door shut and we looked at each other.

Before she had a chance to tell me this entire thing was so obviously insane, I kissed her.

Her sweet lips, gently stained with sugar from her mixed drinks.

Her curious tongue, flirting a little just before my tongue swept into her mouth.

Emily grabbed my shirt.

My left hand touched her leg.

My middle fingertip sliding against the inside of her knee, then up her dress.

Moving with speed. Moving with reason.

Emily broke the kiss and put her head back, letting out a gasping breath.

"Rome," she purred.

I kissed her neck.

My teeth grazed her skin.

My middle fingertip ran up the inside of her thigh.

I grazed the intense warmth of her panties.

Then I paused.

I almost nuzzled my nose against her neck for a second or two.

I couldn't wait to get my wife home and fuck her.

I couldn't wait to put a baby inside her womb.



I POURED Emily a glass of water.

She stood at the sink, one light above her, almost like a heavenly light pouring down on an angel.

I stood back in the dark shadows, like a demon from hell ready to feast.

With her back to me, she offered herself as temptation whether she meant to or not.

I waited all of two seconds before moving toward her.

And that was two seconds too long.

I touched the zipper on her dress.

I pressed my lips to the back of her neck.

She put the glass on the counter.

Her hand shaking a little.

I reached with my right hand and engulfed her right hand.

I kissed her neck again.

My left hand unzipped her dress.

From the top all the way down to her lower back where the zipper ended.

“You are so fucking gorgeous, Em,” I growled. “How have I not fucked my wife yet?”

“The *Vegas* night was insane,” Emily whispered.

“And this isn’t?” I asked.

I kissed down to the clasp of her bra.

I smirked for a second before using my teeth to grab and pull at it.

Emily let out a loud gasp.

I then inched my way down, dropping to my right knee.

That felt a little ironic in a sense that Emily and I were married and yet I never did the whole proper *on-one-knee* proposal thing.

But now I was on one knee.

I was not asking her to marry me.

I did want something from her though.
My hands inched up the inside of her dress.
All the way up to her perfect hips, grabbing the sides of her panties.
I paused for a second.
For effect.
Emily looked back and down at me.
Her cheeks were red.
Blushing. Flushed.
Her eyes wide.
Her lips trembling.
A sense of sexual curiosity burning deep within her.
I stared at her as I stripped her out of her panties.
All the way down her legs.
Helping her step out, one foot at a time.
I dangled her panties from my right pointer finger and stood back up.
My body against hers.
Pressing her against the counter. Against the sink.
I draped my right hand over her shoulder, her panties swaying back and forth from my finger.
I slowly curled my fingers over and over, balling her panties up.
Then I just dropped them on the counter.
I grabbed her hips.
I stepped back.
I spun her around.
“No more wasting time, sweetheart,” I said.
When I touched her shoulder blades, she let out another gasp.
I inched her dress down her arms, then down her body.
Her body shivered as her dress moved past her hips, revealing herself to me.
The curves of her hips, in plain sight.

The best and most natural curve of her body too.
She donned a patch of stubble, prickly and sweet, and when she stepped out of her dress, her pussy danced a seductive dance.
Right before my eyes.
I brought my right hand between her legs.
My middle and ring fingers touching her soft center.
She melted around my touch.
I curled my fingers and offered a small circle or two before pulling away.
Now my fingers glistened.
The smell of her honey called to me.
I almost felt my jaw quivering.
My own jaw! Me!
“Rome,” Emily purred. “I should tell you...”
I moved forward and kissed her cute stubble.
I rubbed my nose against her.
She grabbed for my hair.
“Rome, it’s been a long time,” she blurted out.
I looked up at her. “Long time since... this?”
“Since anything,” Emily confessed.
She bit her bottom lip and her cheeks turned bright red again.
“That’s okay, Em,” I said. “You’re all mine now.”

NOW DID that mean I was going to go soft and gentle and care for her pleasure?

Fuck. No.

My hands rested at her inner thighs.

Guiding her legs open.

She didn’t know what to do.

And if that implied that no man had ever dropped to his knees before her

pussy and had her, then my wife had been living a way too sheltered life.

She was perfect.

Her lips dark, parted, wet with desire—my tongue throbbing to taste the flavor of her body.

I never took care to savor a moment like this before.

Knowing in just a second our relationship would change forever.

I could never go back to my former life. The life I had before tasting her pussy.

I brought my right fingers to her body and peeled her delicate flower open, revealing the glistening bud of her clit.

That was the first place I tasted.

A circling lick, one time, and then I latched against her.

Emily made a noise that echoed in my kitchen and echoed in my head.

Her entire body jumped. Her hips bucked.

One second she grabbed the counter, the next she grabbed at my hair and then my shirt.

My tongue lapped down, tracing an invisible line against her pussy.

I felt her quivering, throbbing, and I told myself the obvious truth.

She was ready to come...

And that was okay with me.

I growled deep in my throat and suckled her clit again.

Her sweet honey filled my mouth.

I could have stayed right there for the rest of my life, craving her, never needing anything else in my life ever again.

Emily made another loud whimpering sound and then screamed, “*I’m sorry!*”

She had no reason to be sorry for climaxing.

That was the whole damn point of this, right?

Her body thrust forward.

I moved with her, my tongue drawing large, random shapes.

Her hips made a circling motion for just a second or two.

Emily grabbed my shirt and let out a yell.

“Hug me,” she managed to groan. “Stand and hug me!”

I hated to leave her pussy though.

It was now mine.

All mine.

I quickly stood up, licking my lips in a hurry, like I had went face first into an ice cream on a hot day.

Emily wrapped her right leg around me and buried her face into my chest.

Clawing for me.

Hips grinding.

She was coming and humping me at the same time.

Unable to control herself and unsure what to do next.

I placed my left hand at the small of her back and felt her rocking her hips.

My right hand found the small clasp of her bra and I twisted it open.

I brought my right hand around her body and moved under her bra with ease.

I cupped her breast in my hand, gently kneading her skin as she groaned and fucked her hips my way.

When Emily finally looked up at me, the look in her eyes was lust and fire.

I had a set series of emotions and triggers that would only benefit me for a little while.

I lowered my mouth down to hers.

I brushed my lips against hers.

Our tongues touched, for a moment.

The reality of Emily tasting her own sweetness from her pussy to my tongue, now to her tongue...

I pulled her closer to me with my left hand.

I moved my left hand down to her ass, then cupped and picked her up.

I carried my wife from the kitchen to the bedroom.

The entire walk we flirted with our eyes, our lips, and our tongues.

Once in the bedroom, I took her to the bed and began to kiss her breasts.

Left to right.

Right to left.

All the while I unbuttoned my shirt and took it off.

I reached down and opened my jeans.

Wrestling them down and off, no time to waste.

No more foreplay needed.

No more teasing needed.

My mind and body craved one thing.

My wife's sweet, warm pussy.

Not with my fingers or my tongue this time either.

I needed more.

I needed it all.

Emily locked her ankles together around my body.

I placed my hands flat to my bed.

She had a dreamy aura about her.

“I want to hear the words, Em,” I said. “Don’t mumble them either. Tell the world what you fucking want right now.”

Emily slid her hands to my face.

“I want you to fuck me, Rome,” she said. “I want you to fuck me right now!”

The words rippled through me and I curled my lip.

Between my legs, my cock stood at full mast.

Throbbing, patiently waiting, aching up into my balls and down the insides of my legs.

I moved myself forward, the swell of Emily’s heat welcoming me.

I broke her threshold as she shuddered under my body.

Almost instantly her back began to arch.

I studied her body.

The way her breasts moved.

The way her stomach moved with deep breaths.

The way we both looked, together.

My cock inching itself deeper by the second.

A tight sheath squeezing, almost pulling at me.

Offering myself to my wife.

I slid my right hand around her body, pulling her against me.

She moved her hands to the back of my neck, locking her fingers together.

I then began to fuck my wife.

Finally.

Chapter Sixteen

EMILY



I LOST track after the third orgasm.

They turned from waves into hurricanes.

Pleasure like I had never experienced, with wild beginnings and greater endings.

I never felt my body *clench* the way it did.

I never felt my body *release* the way it did.

Rome's huge, strong hands touched everywhere on my body too.

Racing from my breasts to my hips. To the backs of my legs. To my ass.

He moved back to his knees and grabbed my inner thighs.

Even with the softest of a squeeze it was ticklish but squirming only made Rome thrust harder and faster and made everything somehow that much better.

Rome turned the impossible into possible, proving to myself that my body had some fun ways to come.

In other words, his sheets were getting wetter by the second and I couldn't stop myself from the intense pleasure that caused it to happen.

Without warning, Rome grabbed my hips with force and pulled himself out of me.

As I let out a much needed scream from the shock of his cock's sudden absence, Rome flipped me over onto my belly with ease.

I had never been tossed around a bed like that before.

I think I liked it. A lot.

He pulled at my hips, forcing me to jump up to my knees, sticking my ass high into the air.

My hands reached forward and grabbed for some pillows as I felt his cock plow right back into my body.

My toes curled tight as I groaned with each hard thrust he gave me.

His hands traveled up my back and then around, cupping my breasts with ease and command.

He gently pinched my nipples using his pointer and middle fingers.

I wasn't even sure if he meant do it on purpose, but it added to the *everything* I felt.

My body rocked and bucked as he took me over and over.

He was using me.

I enjoyed it.

Rome had found some secret compartment inside my soul where I enjoyed being a little bit wild.

When he released his hands from my breasts, he grabbed my ass.

Two hearty handfuls and I didn't care.

He pulled as he thrust.

His thumbs inched closer and closer to somewhere else very tender and never explored before.

My body suddenly jerked back and then forward and down to the bed.

I let out a groan and realized I was coming.

Again?! Seriously?!

Rome lowered his body down to mine.

He didn't squish me to the bed but his presence was more than known.

Without hesitation, he slipped his right hand around to the front of my body and between my legs.

He began to stroke my clit as I came, leaving me unable to find words, sounds, or even air.

My body had entered a state of total orgasmic shock.

At that point Rome could have put anything anywhere and I would have been all for it.

Nothing in my life had ever come close to this.

Ever.

And the thing about Rome?

He just never stopped. Ever.

He kept going.

Fucking me through each orgasm, guiding me to the next.

I graciously remained on my hands and knees until his hands moved to my breasts again and he pulled me upright.

He slowed his movements, his thick cock sliding in and out.

In... and out...

"Tell me you love the way I fuck you, Em," he growled into my ear.

I reached up and back, grabbing for his hair.

I had never felt so sexually alive in my life.

"I love the way you fuck me, Rome," I groaned.

"Tell me you want me to come inside you."

"Yes, Rome, please."

"Say it. Tell me to fill you with my cum."

I bit my bottom lip. A little too hard.

I winced and gasped.

Rome thrust harder. "Say it, Em. Don't make me pull out and cover your back with what you really want."

My body ran cold and then hot.

I never heard a man talk like this in bed.
Or any other time for that matter.
Rome was kind of... mean... but it was still so sexy to hear.
I took a deep breath. "Fill me, Rome."
"With..."
I turned my head and let out a breath. "Give me all your cum."
Rome's hands grabbed my sides and he tossed me away from his body
like I was nothing.
He pounced a second later.
I was on my back.
He was back inside me.
Thrusting. Fucking. Grunting. Taking.
Faster and harder by the second.
I clawed at his back as he grunted louder.
I felt myself starting to climax again.
And that's when I felt him...
He hissed and then released.
Burrowing himself deep into my body.
His cock pulsing, over and over, my warmth collecting his warmth.
A sexy mix of need and desire.
Rome wrapped his arms around me and held me tight.
His body still gently fucking me.
His cock still throbbing, slower by the second.
I gasped for a breath.
On a scale from one-to-ten, that was a fifty million.
I shut my eyes and begged my heart to calm just a little.
My body began to go numb.
Rome's mouth moved to my left breast.
His lips and tongue playfully teased my nipple for a few seconds.
We looked at each other.

“This would be the part where I would make you leave,” he whispered.
“Just so things don’t get complicated.”

“I can’t move, Rome. I am not leaving this fucking bed.”

“I know, Em. And even if you tried to leave, I wouldn’t let you.”

He rolled his tongue over my nipple again.

I arched my back, lifting my chest.

Two seconds later Rome was kissing my breast harder.

Engulfing.

Intention behind those moves...

I took a deep breath and realized what was happening already.

My hips began to rock.

Rome’s cock began to fill up again.

He was getting ready for round two already.



I WASN'T sure if Rome wanted me to actually spend the night or not.

When morning light came, it was too late to worry about.

I slept soundly.

The world could have ended and I would have slept through it with a smile on my face.

To top it all off, when I woke up, Rome was still next to me.

I didn't know why but the first thing I looked at was his left shoulder.

His big, round shoulder.

His huge piece of muscle.

A shoulder that lifted weights, played hockey, probably helped to throw punches when Rome got into fights.

More than that, that shoulder and muscle and the rest of his body... was used to touch me and pick me up. Used to toss me onto the bed. Used to toss me around in the bed too...

I covered my face as I blushed, minus my eyes.

Rome turned his head and smiled. "Morning, Em."

"Hey," I whispered.

Rome rolled onto the shoulder I was just eye humping.

He touched the covers on my face and tugged them down.

"You know... you spent the night..."

"Oops," I said.

I suddenly had the wild fantasy of repeating what we did last night right now.

Why not, right?

Morning. Sex.

Great sex.

Hot sex.

Mind-blowing sex.

The fantasy faded when my phone let out a loud dinging noise.

Followed by another and another.

Rome lifted his head. "Someone wants your attention."

"Probably Ellie. She didn't know about... this..."

"You were figuring you'd just go home, huh?"

"I guess that was the plan," I said. "Sort of."

"That was never the plan, Em."

Chills raced through my body.

My phone dinged two more times.

I finally rolled over and realized I needed to find my phone.

It was somewhere on the floor.

And I was naked.

My phone dinged again.

I made some kind of slithering move to get out of the bed.

I ended up on the floor.

Sitting on my bare butt.

I began to lean to my right, fully intending on crawling, but Rome moved to the edge of the bed to check on me.

“Are you okay?”

I looked up at him. “I don’t want you to see me naked. And I don’t want to crawl with you looking. You’ll be able to see everything.”

“Did you forget about last night, sweetheart?” Rome asked with a smirk.

My entire body blushed at that question and the look on his face.

Of course I remembered what happened last night.

His gigantic hands pulling at my hips, flipping me around, bringing me to my knees, fucking me from behind.

I swallowed hard.

Rome smiled even bigger.

Without another word, he pulled the top blanket off the bed and tossed it to me.

I wrapped it around me to cover myself up.

Believe me, I felt dumb at that moment.

Yes, I was there last night for everything.

In the moment, it was hot and it was *whatever*.

Look. Touch. Taste. Take. Fuck. Have. Lick. Eat. Grab. Pull. Push.

But now it was morning.

Things were different.

How, Emily? How are things different?

My phone dinged even more.

I scrambled through the mess of clothes on the bedroom floor and found my phone.

When I saw the name on the screen, I laughed.

“You okay, Em?” Rome called out.

“It’s Candice. She’s at my place again. And I’m not answering. She wants to know why. She wants to know if I’m home. She wants to know if I’m not home, where am I and why my car is still there.”

Another message came through.

“Oh, great. She’s going to call the police now. In case I hurt myself or something happened.”

“What the hell is with that woman?” Rome asked.

“She’s clingy and manipulative,” I said.

I quickly had to respond to Candice.

Morning Candice. I was not aware you would be stopping by. Unannounced. I am at a friend’s house. That’s all you need to know.

I knew that would piss Candice off.

And I knew she would continue to text me, prying for more information.

I looked at Rome and saw the way he sat up in bed.

His hands flat on the bed, the covers over all the good parts, but plenty of beautiful muscle showing.

I almost took a picture of him to send to Candice.

But I didn’t.

“I better get going,” I said. “She’s going to be a pain in the ass.”

“Wow. You wake up and want to take off. Makes my day easier.”

Rome smirked.

“Right,” I said. “You just kick them all out.”

“It depends. Some get breakfast and a handshake.”

“That’s disgusting,” I said.

I grabbed my clothes off the floor and found a bathroom.

I had to get back into my dress from the night before.

I never experienced what was called *the walk of shame* but this sure felt like it.

This early in the morning wearing a nice dress? With morning breath and messy hair? Desperate for a cup of coffee?

Rome waited for me outside the bathroom.

He had put on a pair of shorts.

Those may have covered his cock but did nothing to hide it.

As we walked to the front door I couldn't help but notice the way his cock swayed back and forth inside his shorts.

At the door, we hugged.

"Please don't let this be weird," I said.

"Never," Rome said. "As long as you don't make it weird."

"Good. Thank you, Rome."

He smirked, then touched my chin. "You're a fucking treat, Em."

I thought he was going to kiss me.

Then I remembered I had no ride home.

Just as I was about to yell *Fuck!* Rome pointed to a car.

Waiting for me.

He told me he ordered me a ride while I got changed in the bathroom.

I wasn't sure if it that was sweet of him or him wanting to boot me out of his house.

Either way, a minute later I was in the back seat of the car, alone.

It began to drive.

Rome's house disappeared.

I smiled.

Then something else hit me.

This whole thing with seeing Rome again...

Fuck - we were supposed to be getting divorced.

Chapter Seventeen

ROME



BEEN A MONTH OR SO, **hasn't it?**

I stood in the shower with hot water hitting me from all directions as I read the text message from Emily.

Yeah, it had been a month since I saw her last.

Since that wild night and interesting morning when she left.

I never heard from her again.

I didn't bother texting either, not sure why.

Feelings definitely seemed a little mixed and intense at times with her.

The whole being married thing was one set of feelings.

My instant desire to give her a baby was a whole other.

Silence meant some kind of acceptance.

Or maybe it wasn't.

I had been busy with prepping for the upcoming hockey season.

My life consisted of lifting weights, eating, drinking, and hockey.

"Knock, knock," a flirty voice called out as the bathroom door opened.

Oh. And then there was that other thing...

She walked into the bathroom and I opened the shower door just enough to look out.

Wearing nothing but a *SOLA Empire* shirt.

Her bright blonde hair in a messy bun on the top of her head.

Her name was Sadie or Sarah... or maybe even something like Rachel.

I didn't care about names.

Never did.

Now, before anyone wants to track me down and cut my dick off and throw it into the ocean...

“What happened last night?” the woman asked.

I gave a classic Rome smirk and didn't respond.

I didn't want to respond.

I didn't know how to respond.

Well, here's the deal.

We were flirting all night.

You were beautiful.

I hope you know you're beautiful.

You just need to understand my position.

Damn, I'm married.

But you don't know that.

Now here's the deal (I know I just said that, oh well).

The flirting and all that took a turn, as expected.

You wanted to come with me.

Who was I to say no to you?

So we ended up back here.

You decided to drink whiskey right out of the bottle.

You decided to climb up on the coffee table and strip naked.

To be fair, that was because we were talking about strip clubs earlier in the night, but whatever.

You got completely naked, danced for me, then fell from the coffee table

into my arms.

I sat down on the couch and you proceeded to... well...

You humped me.

You were naked.

I had my clothes on.

You finished yourself, then said you would meet me in the bedroom.

What you don't know was that instead of chasing you down and fucking you, I paced my living room, debating what to do.

In that time, you climbed into my bed and fell asleep.

And here we are now.

“Should I get going?” the woman asked.

“I hate to be that kind of guy...”

“Oh I get it. You're busy with hockey and all that. Trust me, I'm not the clinging type either. I was going to see if you wanted me to take this shirt off. Return it to you. And then maybe I'd grab a shower too.”

I whistled. “Damn, that's tempting. You're evil for that. You know that, right?”

The woman laughed and turned.

She wiggled her hips and lifted her shirt, showing off her perfectly curved ass.

For the first time in my life I felt like a true piece of shit guy.

This woman probably thought she and I had wild sex all night.

Which we didn't.

At the same time I had my wife texting me...

“Okay, I can read the room,” the woman said. “Shoot me a text sometime if you want.”

With that said, the woman exited the bathroom.

I looked at my phone again.

I replied to my wife's text.

Hey. Haven't heard from you in a while.

I waited until Emily wrote back.

I saw the little dots on the screen.

It felt like she was typing me a book.

Then the text came through.

No need to type it all out and read it out loud for the world to hear.

The quick summary?

Emily was late to get her period and she wanted me to come over to her place so she could take a pregnancy test.



THE WHOLE NOTION of getting her pregnant didn't feel real.

Or possible.

I knew the night we hooked up, I was going round after round, buried inside her perfect body. And I knew there was zero protection between us.

She wasn't on birth control.

I wasn't wearing a condom.

With the full intention of getting her pregnant.

Now that the moment started to show itself, I felt...

Well, I wasn't sure what I felt.

I knocked on her door and waited.

Emily didn't answer the door.

It was someone else.

A beautiful blonde-haired woman with blue eyes and a low-cut top, who was more than obviously not wearing a bra.

She had on a whole bunch of necklaces and bracelets and Emily's condo smelled like some kind of spicy incense.

"Rome."

She stepped closer to me and took a deep breath.

Then she nodded.

“Yes, I can tell. I can feel the connection.”

“Right,” I said. “Is Emily here?”

A split second later, she reached between my legs and gently cupped.

“Whoa,” I called out.

“Ellie, what are you doing to him?” Emily’s voice asked.

A second later, she appeared and let out a gasp.

She grabbed Ellie’s arm. “No thank you! You can’t just grab someone’s dick without their permission. And he’s my husband!”

“I was feeling for the energy,” Ellie said.

“Plenty of it, right?” I asked.

“This is getting out of hand already,” Emily said.

“What the hell is going on here?” I asked.

“We’re bringing forth life,” Ellie said.

She grabbed Emily’s right and my left hand.

She led us into Emily’s condo and toward the bathroom.

She paused and looked at me. “I need to prepare the room. Stay right here. Feel free to connect again as need be.”

“Connect...?” I said.

“Yes,” Ellie said. “You could absolutely fuck Emily right now again. Capture all that energy.”

“Ellie, stop it,” Emily growled.

As soon as Ellie went into the bathroom, Emily grabbed my shirt and pulled.

We ended up in her bedroom.

I had to admit, for a second or two I thought she was going to pull me to the bed and tell me to fuck her.

“That’s Ellie,” she said.

“I picked up on that.”

“She’s...”

“Eccentric,” I said. “She’s the one who told you to show up at my place

and demand a divorce.”

“Yes,” Emily said. “She’s all about energy and that kind of vibe.”

“This is very interesting stuff, Em.”

“I’m sorry she touched you. She shouldn’t have done that. I’m not okay with that.”

“Maybe I am,” I grinned.

“That’s gross. That’s my best friend.”

“She grabbed me. I didn’t ask for it.”

“Rome...”

“You’re really late?”

“I’m late,” Emily said. She swallowed hard. “I wasn’t going to bother you. I don’t want to drag you into this. I hope you know that. I mean, if this test is positive... I’m not going to expect anything from you. I’m not going to ask or demand anything or get lawyers involved. I know you’re rich and I know that could be a scary thing for you...”

“Wow. You really put thought into this.”

“I know what I want, Rome. And you offered to help. Ellie said I needed to text you. That you needed to be here. That your energy was needed. And, yes, I know that sounds weird. You’re probably thinking of it as a sexual thing too. Knowing you.”

“How so?”

“You know. *Energy* as... *sperm*...”

I laughed.

Emily blushed and buried her face into her hands.

I touched her wrists and pulled her hands away. “I’m glad you texted. I’m sorry it’s been a month since we’ve seen each other.”

“I don’t need that, Rome. Any of that sweet stuff.”

“I’m not being sweet. I’m being honest.”

The door flew open and Ellie jumped into the room.

“We’re all set,” she announced. “The energy is right. I’m feeling this. I

cannot promise anything, Emily. You know that. I can only go by what I feel. But it's time to take the pregnancy test."

Ellie walked toward us.

She placed one hand to my chest, over my heart.

The other hand went over Emily's stomach.

Ellie shut her eyes and began to move her lips, but she didn't speak.

I looked at Emily.

She swallowed hard, embarrassed.

I smiled.

I was used to weird stuff with women.

But this?

Emily taking a pregnancy test.

To find out if she was pregnant, obviously.

But if she was, that meant I was the father.

Now I felt my heart starting to race.

What have I actually gotten myself into here?

Chapter Eighteen

EMILY



DEJA VU HIT me as I peed on the pregnancy test.

I stared at the bathroom wall to avoid making eye contact with Ellie.

She stood near the shower, whispering to herself.

And just outside the bathroom door was Rome.

Ellie insisted on Rome being in the bathroom but Rome and I both agreed that would not happen.

I did not want to pee in front of Rome.

And Rome did not want to watch me pee.

So the guy does have boundaries?

I finished with the pregnancy test and placed it on the bathroom sink.

I washed my hands and Ellie opened the door.

“Now everyone out,” she said. “Everyone think about this moment. I want complete silence. We need to pool our energy together. Really concentrate on this.”

I let out a long sigh.

Ellie pointed at me. “No. None of that.”

“I’m sorry,” I said. “I’m releasing. That’s all. It’s been a very hectic month for me.”

Ellie guarded the bathroom door as though behind it was the winning lottery ticket for a couple billion dollars.

Rome and I walked to the kitchen where I offered him a drink.

“I’m sorry I don’t have anything else,” I said as I gave him a bottle of water. “It’s been hectic to say the least.”

“Why’s that?”

“Just work stuff.”

“I thought teachers don’t work in the summer?”

“Teachers always work. Just because we aren’t in the classroom doesn’t mean we aren’t teaching. Plus, with this promotion...”

“Did you get it?” Rome asked.

I noted the way his eyes lit up.

Aw, that’s sweet of him to get excited for me.

“No, not yet. Lots going on still. Dealing with Candice is headache enough.”

“I bet,” Rome said. “I’ve just been getting ready for the season. Trying to stay out of trouble.”

“You haven’t replaced me in your bed yet?” I asked, wiggling my eyebrows.

Rome threw out a nervous laugh that made my stomach drop.

I turned away from him, feeling a little sick.

He stepped up behind me. “Em, not that I owe it to anyone, but I haven’t fucked anyone since you. And to wait that long? I’ve never done that before.”

I thought my knees were going to give out hearing him say that.

I had no idea what it meant or implied on his end.

It did bring a sudden rush of reality to my life and my current situation.

If the test is positive.

My life forever changes.

I looked down at my stomach.

I touched it.

There was no stopping my mind as it began to run wild.

Picturing myself pregnant.

First off, I had no idea if I would get sick or not.

Would I have the classic morning sickness in the morning?

Or would I have it in the afternoon? At night? Overnight?

Would I be sick for a little while or the entire time?

My body would quickly change too.

If I'm pregnant, that's already been happening. My body is changing by the second right now.

It was a lot to think about.

Honestly, after that crazy-good night with Rome, I didn't think much about having a baby. Or even him. A part of me wondered if I should have pursued the whole divorce thing, but since Rome didn't bother me and I didn't bother him... *I just didn't bother with it.*

I meant what I said to Rome about being busy.

The last month went by as a blur.

So much so that it was Ellie who reminded me about my period.

I normally had everything tracked down to the day. Forever filled with a sense of excitement about the possibility of becoming pregnant.

Until this past month.

I took a break from it all without really thinking about it.

I was supposed to go back to doctor appointments and all that, but I didn't.

Then Ellie brought up the subject.

Then I realized I was late.

And now here I was.

Standing in my kitchen, looking out the window, feeling alone and odd.

Even though I wasn't either one of those things.

“Em.”

The voice moved through me like a warm knife in soft butter.

I turned around and Rome was right there again.

I felt foolish once again, allowing Ellie to convince me to bring Rome back into my life again.

My mind and judgement always seemed clouded when it came to wanting a baby.

A sense of desperation made me do, well, desperate things.

“This is so backwards,” I blurted out.

“What is?”

“People are supposed to plan this stuff out, Rome,” I said. “Having a baby together? We have no idea what our plan is. I just wanted your sperm. You just wanted to get laid. Now you’re here again. We’re near each other again. Aren’t people supposed to be together? To be in love? To have a plan?”

“I doubt that’s how it works all the time, sweetheart,” he said. “I’m here because you needed me here. Any chance of making this better for you.”

“What happens if the test is positive then? What are you going to do?”

Rome didn’t get a chance to answer my question.

Ellie stepped up next to Rome.

“How are we feeling? How is the energy?” Ellie asked.

“You tell us,” Rome said.

“Oh, there’s something here,” Ellie said with a smirk.

I jumped forward, needing to end anything before it started.

Last thing I needed was for Ellie to make some kind of comment about energies...

Rome’s cock energy matched my pussy energy.

“It’s time,” Ellie said. “We must go look. Together.”

“No,” I said. “I’ll go look. Alone.”

Ellie opened her mouth.

Rome came to my defense. “That’s a good idea. It’s Emily’s body. And it’s her pee.”

“Thanks, Rome,” I said.

Ellie smiled ear to ear.

Too big of a smile.

I walked by my best friend, leaving her alone with my husband.

Into the bathroom I went. Alone.

Taking each step slower than the previous one.

I paused and leaned forward, starting to hover over the pregnancy test.

My heart raced.

My eyes felt a little shaky.

My mind insisted on flashing images fast.

Me pregnant. My belly big. My feet hurting after a long day of teaching.

Me waking up in the middle of the night with contractions. Me having a baby.

As far as Rome went...

I stepped up to the bathroom sink and looked down at the pregnancy test.

I stared at it.

I blinked a few times.

It was official...

I was not pregnant.



IT FELT like a crushing blow to my soul for some reason.

I went right back to the night with Rome.

All that sex.

How many times did he finish?

And each time he finished, he kind of just... held there.

Inside me.

Of course that didn’t imply it would be that easy to get pregnant.

I took the pregnancy test from the bathroom and forced a smile on my face.

I didn't know why I felt the need to smile, but I did.

"Not pregnant," I said.

Ellie frowned.

Rome didn't make any face at all.

I couldn't tell if he was relieved or not.

"Oh, Emily," Ellie said. "This doesn't make any sense to me. I felt..."

She threw her arms around me and hugged me.

I stared at Rome.

He just stood there, tall and strong.

A stern look on his face.

Almost like a protective look on his face.

"I'm never wrong," Ellie whispered to me. "There's this thing with time though. The concept and whether it's real or not..."

I broke away from Ellie.

I was going to politely tell her to just shut up for a second.

Instead of speaking words, I simply just burst into tears.

Right in front of Ellie.

Right in front of Rome.

I covered my mouth and tried to gasp, but all that did was make the crying noises louder and more awkward.

I held my left hand out - still holding the negative pregnancy test - to keep Ellie away from me as I began to retreat.

I ended up going back into the bathroom, shutting the door, locking it.

I crouched down at the door, my chest and stomach tightening and heaving.

What I really wanted to do was scream but I fought it off.

Mostly because I had no idea why I was crying.

I mean, yeah, okay, it was now another month gone by with another

failed attempt at getting pregnant.

It stung a little, sure.

It wasn't the end of the world though.

It wasn't the end of my journey here.

Maybe subconsciously I thought having sex with Rome would somehow magically make things work. But that was foolish to think.

I knew some of the tears and feelings were embarrassment.

I really didn't know Rome that well.

And it felt strange standing there holding a pregnancy test with my pee on it, having the test be negative, then having Ellie spouting her loopy stuff.

Not that Rome did anything either.

Which I wasn't even sure what he was supposed to do.

Hug me? Kiss me? Celebrate? Get mad too?

It was a whole lot at once.

I looked at the test again.

Still negative.

No baby.

Nope.

Nothing.

At least I still had the memories of the mind-blowing sex with Rome.

I wanted to go back to that moment.

With his strong hands grabbing my body - grabbing my hips - commanding me around the bed.

From outside the door, I heard Ellie and Rome talking.

"This is really hard for her," Ellie said. "It's been a bit of a journey."

"I've picked up on that," Rome said. "She's said a little bit too. What can I do now?"

"I'm not sure there is anything," Ellie said. "Maybe it's best if you leave."

"Yeah," Rome said. "Okay."

I grabbed for the bathroom door handle and pulled myself back to my feet.

By the time I opened the bathroom door and stepped out, Rome was gone. That felt like another devastating blow.

I leaned against the door and felt some of the crying emotion get overtaken by anger.

He left that quick?

He just bolted like that?

I gritted my teeth.

My eyes filled with even more tears.

Okay, Rome... you just showed what kind of father you'd be...

Chapter Nineteen

ROME



SO EMILY WASN'T PREGNANT.

After all that great sex and all that waiting.

The pregnancy test said *nope. No thanks. No way.*

Her best friend said *nope. No thanks. Go away.*

All the while Emily cried after locking herself in the bathroom.

To be fair, this was not what I signed up for at all.

Marriage or not, the moment had become so very intense.

I had no idea what my place was in the moment either.

If the test came up positive, then yeah, I had a place. It would have been my sperm we were all celebrating.

But with a negative pregnancy test, all that proved was... my guys didn't get the job done.

So I left.

As soon as I started to drive away, I felt a little bit of a sinking feeling in my stomach.

I thought for a second I was either really hungry or I had to use the

bathroom.

What I didn't realize was that it was guilt.

Actual guilt.

Real guilt.

I even looked in the mirrors - all three of them - as though I expected to still be able to see Emily's condo. Or as though I expected to see Emily running after me, crying, needing me.

I gripped the steering wheel tight.

There was something about her crying...

Seeing a woman cry never got to me.

It was usually just awkward and I'd find my way out of the situation.

Unless, of course, it was a beautiful woman who was crying over an ex or something and she needed some personal care... because, face it, if it was going to lead to sex, I was always willing and ready.

But with Emily, it was different.

When she started to cry, I felt that stir in my stomach.

I wanted her to not cry. I wanted her to not feel any kind of hurt or pain.

"I care about her," I said out loud.

The words made me shiver.

I barely knew anything about my wife, yet I somehow cared about her.

The most I knew came from my night of exploration of her body.

Sweet, tender skin. Perfectly placed and shaped curves. The taste of places deemed *naughty* but were far from it. The sounds of her groans and cries of pleasure. The way her voice changed a little when she climaxed and then begged for me. The noises she made in unison with my cock as it spilled itself into her body over and over.

And yet she wasn't pregnant.

And yet I just upped and left.

Leaving her behind, crying in the bathroom.

While she wasn't alone, it didn't sit right with me.

Even if Ellie did tell me to leave.

What the hell did Emily's best friend actually know anyway. Right?

I found myself at a crossroad.

I could either act like a one-night stand... or I could act like a husband...



I PLACED the bags on the floor.

I knocked on the door and waited.

When I saw Emily's face after she opened the door, I felt a sudden rush of relief.

"Hey, Em," I said.

"Rome?" she called out.

As though she hadn't seen me in a decade.

"I wanted to, uh..."

I reached down and picked up the bags.

Emily looked at the bags, then at me.

"I didn't know what else to really do," I confessed. "So I thought maybe some comfort would help. Even just a little."

The door opened the rest of the way.

Ellie stood next to Emily.

"Look who's back," Ellie said.

"Brought some stuff over," I said. "I've got some sushi here. Really good stuff too. Was kind of thinking... I don't know. You're not supposed to eat sushi if you're pregnant, right? So since you're not..."

"Just to remind me of that, huh?" Emily asked.

"No... I didn't..." I looked at Ellie. "I brought you some rolls too. Veggie ones though. I wasn't sure what your stance is on meat and all that."

"Wow," Ellie said. "I'm really impressed. You thought outside the box a little for Emily. And you included me. And you assumed something about

me, but not exactly in a disrespectful way.”

“I also brought some beer,” I said. “Again...”

“Right,” Emily said. “Since I’m not pregnant. I can eat raw fish and get drunk.”

I swallowed hard.

“Ellie, can you give us a minute alone?” Emily asked without looking away from me.

“Sure,” Ellie said.

She backed away and put her hands together, nodding. Smiling.

A part of me wished Emily felt the way Ellie did at my return.

“I had some other things on my mind too, Em. Was thinking while I was driving.”

“Oh yeah? Going to share?”

“Um, you know, I don’t know how it all works, but what if things are just too early? You know? Like I was thinking about it. With the sperm and the egg and all that. The way it touches or whatever. I mean, what if you have, uh, you know, strong eggs. Like shells that are hard to crack...”

“Rome.”

“Yeah?”

“What the fuck are you trying to say?”

I let out a nervous laugh. “I’m just holding out hope. What if you are pregnant but it’s not showing up yet?”

“Then why did you bring sushi and beer?” Emily asked.

“Oh. Right. I guess I was playing both sides... I could go get something else. Just so you know. But, you know, it’s your body. You know how you feel. And, hey, I just want you to know, I’m all in still.”

“All in? For what?”

“Giving you a baby, Em.”

“What?”

“I always finish the job when I start it. I take this personally now. I take it

as a challenge.”

“A challenge.”

“That’s right. So I’m ready to go. Always ready to go. If you are.”

“Rome, no offense, but there is a lot happening right now at the moment.”

“Sure there is. That’s why I’m here.”

“You think sex just solves every problem in the world, don’t you?”

“Maybe it won’t solve it, but it sure as hell feels good, right?” I inched closer to Emily. “I never once said our set of circumstances were good or perfect or anything, Em. Normally, I’d be out of here and out of here for good, okay?”

“So I’m someone special?”

“Yeah. My wife.”

Emily’s cheeks slowly shifted to a dark red color.

“And I mean it. About this whole thing, Em. You want a baby. There’s no reason why we can’t keep going. Even Ellie said she felt something.”

“Don’t bring her into this,” Emily said.

“What? Why? I’m being serious. She said-”

“She’s wrong.”

“But she...”

“Just trust me, Rome. She’s wrong.”

“Are you willing to say that to her face then?” I asked. “Or are you just mad things didn’t go your way the first time around?”

Emily grabbed my shirt.

She twisted her fist and curled her lip high into the air.

“You’re starting to annoy me now, Rome.”

“Okay.”

“I’m telling you Ellie was wrong. I’m telling you I’m not pregnant. And I’m telling you no amount of pregnancy tests today, tomorrow, or the day after will change that. If that doesn’t sink in...”

“It doesn’t. I don’t accept failure.”

“Then maybe you’ll accept nature.”

“What?”

“I got my period, Rome.”

I shook my head. “How? When?”

“How? How did I get my period? Do you really want me to explain how a monthly menstrual cycle works?”

“That’s not what I meant, Em. I meant... you just... you took a pregnancy test... there’s wasn’t any...”

Emily shook her head.

“But now... there is...”

Emily nodded.

I thought about it.

Nothing exactly made much sense to me.

It felt like years went by before Emily looked even more annoyed at me.

Ready to bite my head off like a black widow spider after mating.

They killed their mates, right? Or was that praying mantis’?

“Rome.”

“Emily.”

“You are an idiot.”

“I’ve been told that before.”

“I guess I have to come out and say it. Or explain it. You left, right? You took off.”

“I was told to-”

“Ellie walked me to the kitchen to get me a drink. I had no idea what had overcome me and with such force. Then I had a *duh* moment. Usually right before I get my period my hormones ramp up ten times more than normal. A couple months ago I stubbed my toe on one of the dining room chairs and I lost my mind. Then... I got my period. Understand?”

“No.”

“I was in the kitchen, feeling way too much at once. Okay? And then I

remembered that's usually how it happens for me. Not even a minute later..."

"It just shows up like that?"

"Yes, Rome. It's not a pizza delivery where you know the time or can track your driver through your phone. It just does what it wants. So, yes, while you were gone, I got my period. Weird timing? Definitely. But I was late a week, which was probably due to the stress of this past month. I should have taken a minute to think it all out before getting Ellie involved and turning this moment into what it became. Because this whole thing is really weird. Now I have cramps. I'm bleeding. I can feel my body bloating. My boobs are sore. Which they've been for a few days. There's just a lot going on."

"Back up a second," I said. "You have my full attention when it comes to boobs. They're sore? Do you need someone to rub them?"

"Wow, Rome. Just... wow..."

"I'm just making sure," I said. "Because it's obvious we aren't having sex, right? I mean, we can have sex. I'm fine with it. I've heard that women enjoy having sex while they have their periods. Obviously we won't be able to make a baby. But we can still have fun, right?"

"With that said, you need to leave," Emily said. "And stay away, okay?"

She made a bold move, taking the bag of sushi from me. And taking the beer from me.

She stepped a little closer to me and jumped to her toes to kiss the left side of my jawline.

Emily moved back into her apartment, smiled, and kicked the door shut.

So in a matter of a second, she took the food and booze, and left me with a little peck of a kiss and nothing more.

In other words, she was a badass.

It was probably one of the reasons I married her.

Chapter Twenty

EMILY



ELLIE TWISTED the cap off of a beer bottle and handed it to me.

I sat on the living room floor, my back against the couch.

A buffet of sushi in front of me.

I didn't even bother to turn on the TV either.

Meaning I just sat there.

A beer in my hand.

The sight of the sushi making my mouth water because the smell did nothing for me.

Wet fish.

Not very appetizing.

Ellie gently sat down on the couch.

I rested my head on her right knee.

She touched my hair. Her fingers moving through slowly.

“There is a lot happening here right now,” Ellie whispered.

“I know.”

“Take a drink, Emily. You need it.”

“I’m glad we have something to eat and drink,” I said. “It’ll be good for us.”

“You’re sure that you and Rome... I know I felt the connection...”

I lifted my head and looked back and up at Ellie. “Tell me you’re not asking what I think you are.”

“We’ve all been there,” Ellie said. “In the heat of the moment. Things get wild and hot. The endings happen as they happen. You know what I mean?”

“Ellie, if you’re asking if Rome came inside me, I promise you... he did. More than once. When he came, he thrust so hard and held there. I could feel...” I shut my eyes. “I’m not talking about this.”

“Okay. So the sex ended the way it was supposed to. Now take away all the baby making pressure... how was it?”

I began to gulp down the beer.

I reached forward for some sushi, skipping the chopsticks.

I popped two rolls into my mouth, making sure it was extra full.

Talking about my sex life was not something I did.

Not even to Ellie.

Not that I had a very active sex life.

Ellie slid from the couch to the floor.

I looked at her, my cheeks puffed out, full of delicious sushi.

I chewed slowly.

I felt my face burning red hot.

Ellie just stared back at me with the small yet convincing smile.

“Do you think you can hide from me?” Ellie asked. “I can see, sense, and feel it all. So if you don’t want to talk, I will. The sex with Rome was the best sex you ever had. Not because he’s a big and gruff hockey player. Not because his cock was nice and thick and he knew how to use it. It was more than that. It was all you, Emily. You’re the one who wanted it. Craved it. Your body lured him in. You captured all that feral, instinctual stuff that we never talk about because we can’t see it, scan it or find it or whatever. But it’s

there. Oh, Emily, it's there..."

I held up my left hand.

I hurried to chew and swallow.

Then I gulped down some more beer.

I gasped for a breath and I looked at my best friend.

"Yes," I said. "Yes to it all. Okay? Yes!"

My voice grew louder.

"Tell me everything," Ellie said. "Don't hold back."

"You want to know? Huh? You really want to know? Fine." I climbed to my feet. "He was the best sex I ever had! Ever! Nobody ever came close. Not even that thing we did when we were on vacation. Remember that?"

"Oh, I remember," Ellie said. "Those two businessmen were fun."

"Not even close. Rome just grabbed me and took me and had me. He wasn't aggressive but he was just..."

"He found your limits," Ellie said in a soft voice. "Limits you didn't know you had."

"Yes!" I cried out. "Oh, Ellie, yes!" I dropped down to my knees. "There was this one moment... he grabbed me by my hips and flipped me over onto my stomach. He grabbed my hips again..." I grabbed the leg of the coffee table and pulled. Ellie had to quickly grab my beer bottle so it wouldn't topple over and spill all over the sushi. "He just pulled me up onto my knees and my ass was right there..."

I touched my forehead and sighed.

"You're getting all worked up right now just thinking about it," Ellie said.

I nodded. "I know."

"I've never seen you like this."

"I've never felt like this."

"And it's all just sexual?"

"Yes."

"And you wanted him to get you pregnant?"

“Is that crazy?”

“I’m not the one who defines crazy. Everyone is different.”

I sat back down.

I helped myself to a drink.

I ate some more sushi.

After a minute or two of silence, I looked at Ellie again.

“The strange part of it all? I went to find him to divorce him. You know? Think about it, Ellie. I haven’t seen him since the night we... *you know the story...* and then all this time later I just showed up to his place. To ask for a divorce. I felt desperate, you know? I figured he would be all over it. Or something. I don’t even know, Ellie. I feel so scattered right now over it all. But the point I’m making is that I went to his place to tell him we needed a divorce and now look at us. I mean, he wanted to put a baby in me! And I wanted him to! I let him... try!”

Ellie nodded. She leaned toward me. She whispered, “You’re welcome.”

“Excuse me? *You’re welcome.* For what?”

“All of this. What did you think would happen? It’s kismet, Emily. It’s all kismet.”

“Oh, right. You set this entire thing up on your own? You knew this would happen?”

“I can’t predict the future. I just go by energy.”

“Energy...”

“You and Rome have enough energy to power the world.”

“Stop it,” I said. “I’m not going to listen to this. There was a thing involved. A plan. An agreement. Okay? And now that I think about it, it kind of feels reckless. I was going to let him get me pregnant? Then what? Raise a baby all alone, knowing the baby’s father was a famous hockey player?”

“You’re putting too much pressure on yourself, Emily,” Ellie said with a big smile.

I reached for more sushi.

I felt Ellie still looking at me.

I wanted to hate her.

And I wanted to hate Rome.

But I couldn't do it.

Ellie was my best friend.

Rome was my husband.

Plus... Rome gave me the greatest sex I ever experienced... how could I be mad at him, ever?



THE REST of the night I tried to keep the conversation moving in any direction other than Rome and his cock.

Ellie had other plans.

No matter what I tried to talk about, she steered it back to Rome. And sex.

When I asked her if she finished the design for her next Zen garden at home, she smiled at me and said, *Rome found his Zen garden between your legs, huh?*

Eventually we both called it quits and slept together in my bed.

That's what best friends did. There was nothing *extra* about it.

Yet I found myself dozing off, smiling, knowing damn well if I were to text Rome or take a quick picture of Ellie and I in my bed together, it would drive him insane.

Knowing Rome, he'd end up at the door, begging to join us.

I fell asleep with a smile on my face.

What more could I ask for, right?

Considering the day and night I had.

Thinking for the entire day that I was pregnant. Picturing my life - with and without Rome in it. Wondering what would happen if Rome wanted to be

a father. Wanted to be involved. How that would look for us. Not as a couple or anything. But just as two people raising a baby and a child together.

Only to have it just vanish.

The craziness and slight embarrassment of taking a pregnancy test and having it come up negative. Right in front of Rome too.

And then my period suddenly deciding to show up.

Meaning if I just waited a little bit extra before getting Rome involved and a pregnancy test involved, then today would not have happened.

I woke up the next morning to someone shaking me.

“Emily,” Ellie’s voice groaned. “Someone wants your attention.”

“Huh? What?”

I sat up and Ellie had my phone in her right hand. “Your stupid phone has been vibrating and stuff.”

“Who is it?”

“I don’t know. I’m not looking at your phone. Whoever it is, tell them to leave you alone. Unless it’s your husband. If it’s him, tell him to bring some coffee. Tell him he can play with your boobs and even mine.”

“Hey,” I growled. “Don’t say things like that.”

“Oh. Right. You’re *Miss Monogamous*.”

I grabbed my phone from Ellie’s hand and gave my eyes a second to adjust to the fact that it was morning and my room was bright.

When I saw Candice’s name, I groaned.

“This bitch,” I whispered.

“Candice?” Ellie asked. “Really?”

“She’s obsessed. I think she just wants to be so annoying that I just take my name out of the promotion,” I said. “She’s smart. Calculated. But she’s...”

My voice trailed.

Then I felt my throat close up.

Ellie rolled to her back. “What’s wrong?”

“I’m fucked,” I whispered.

“What?”

Ellie started to sit up.

“This fucking bitch,” I said. “She’s been digging. Snooping. Spying on me.”

“Spying?”

“Maybe not spying. But she knows everything.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“She knows about Rome and me,” I said. “She knows I’m married. She somehow found out.”

I showed Ellie my phone.

The texts from Candice.

Calling me out.

Connecting the dots and knowing that Rome wasn’t an electrician. That he was my husband. That I was secretly married.

And...

... you know Emily, no offense and all, but this is the kind of stuff that starts a scandal and the last thing you want or need is a scandal right now. This kind of thing gets out and it can hurt you a lot. Not even just the promotion. Forget about that. Think about your life. Career. This is very intense stuff! Can we talk over some coffee? Please?

“Okay,” Ellie said. “This woman is a psycho.”

“I know. And she knows about Rome. I can’t deny it now. I have to...”

I dropped my phone.

“Okay, here’s what we do,” Ellie said. “First, we get out of bed. Second, we get properly hydrated and caffeinated. Then, we go find-”

“I know what I have to do,” I said. “I can get ahead of this.”

I turned my head and looked at Ellie.

I knew exactly how to handle Candice and this situation.

There was just one problem...

It required me spending more time with Rome.

Chapter Twenty-One

ROME



I PACE *my place for a little bit, then I'm off to the gym.*

How in the world did I sleep last night? Alone?

I have no idea.

My mind racing left to right, up and down, trying to tell myself I was not worried one bit about Emily.

Telling myself she has Ellie with her.

They had something to eat and drink and they would be okay.

Hell, it was no secret that Ellie would know what to do more than I would for Emily.

Emily was my wife, yes, but what did that even mean?

Now if it were an expedition into making Emily orgasm the most? I'd be first in line and win every prize and award in the world.

Even Emily knew that too.

How did I sleep?

Again - no idea.

But I woke up annoyed.

Coffee didn't help.

So I end up at the gym.

Lifting weights as heavy as my body can manage.

Still thinking about Emily.

Taking rests in between sets either looking at my phone, wondering if I should check up on her or if I should just imagine her naked, taking her from behind. The feel of her hips in my hands. Pulling her as I thrust forward. The sound of my cock slamming into her beautiful pussy. The sight of her... from behind...

Now I have to be careful with those thoughts because I don't need my cock climbing down my gym shorts and poking its head out.

The reality of yesterday is that Emily thought she was pregnant. And she wanted to be pregnant. Aside from the shit show that her best friend insisted on creating, it must have hurt Emily more than a little to want that so badly and then have it not happen.

As I sit there thinking about my next move, a text pops up.

From Emily.

She's got another situation at hand now.

It involves Candice.

Ah, Candice.

And here's the interesting part.

Candice knows about Emily and me.

Apparently this lady put on her detective hat and did some snooping.

How did she find out about Emily and me?

No idea.

But apparently there is some kind of paper trail out there on the internet if you wanted to look hard enough.

I mean, hey, what did I care?

Emily is in a panic.

It's a flurry of texts about the thing.

That a scandal would ruin her chances at the promotion.

That a secret marriage makes her look bad.

She's not sure how to handle it.

But then she is a second later.

I've got it! There's a meeting in a week! The meeting! Yes!

I smile as the texts keep coming.

There's just something about Emily.

She's wound up so tight. So innocent. The whole schoolteacher thing.

Yet...

I need you, Rome. That's the point here. You have to play the part.

Okay?

I decide to bail on the gym.

I walk to the locker room as I respond to my wife.

So you kick me out yesterday? And now you need me today? I don't

know about that, Em.

I smile as I send the text.

I picture her panicking.

Call me what you want, but I fucking love this.

Emily texts back.

Rome! This is serious! Please!

I'm in the locker room and I sit down on the floor near the lockers and text my wife back.

I love when a woman is desperate. Just how desperate are you, Em?

She replies with a bunch of question marks.

I shake my head.

You want something from me, sweetheart. So maybe I want something from you.

I get a middle finger emoji in return.

Then a text.

This isn't the time for games. You want to get into dirty texts? Do it

later. And, no, this isn't about negotiating sex either. Please, Rome. I need your help. This is a favor... but it's not that big...

"Okay, Em," I say out loud.

Fair enough, Em. You think it's a small favor. Fine. I want something in return. Small favor for a small favor. Send me a picture of your boobs.

I can almost hear her cursing my name.

I wait for the fighting response and look forward to the flirting.

One boob. Give me a sec.

I'm shocked.

No fighting.

No arguing.

She's going to take out a boob, take a picture, and text it to me.

I almost don't believe it...

Then the picture comes through.

It's a picture of Emily's bare left breast.

Her soft skin, tender dark-pink nipple.

I grit my teeth and can taste her in my mouth.

I have no response at the moment.

Emily has put me in my place.

And she's made my cock hard for the millionth time so far today.



A WEEK LATER, I parked my car at the side of the building.

I grabbed my mirror and did a quick check on myself.

As far as I saw myself... Rome.

That was me.

Just Rome.

Wearing my normal attire.

Jeans with a well-worn, worn out look.

A plain black t-shirt.

That's all I ever needed.

I did have a couple nicer articles of clothing in the back seat if need be.

A nice button-down shirt.

A sportscoat.

I didn't need any of that though tonight.

This was just some administration meeting.

Emily texted me the entire thing.

Who, what, where, when... everything.

I gathered just how much this meant to her.

The meeting and me showing up.

Playing the good husband role and all that.

I climbed out of my car and looked around.

For some reason I felt more nervous than I did attending the charity event that Ellen forced me to go to.

For comfort, I took my phone out and opened my texts with Emily.

I scrolled up just a little bit and there it was.

Her boob.

Nice.

I stared longer than I should have.

After all, I was Rome.

I was the bad boy hockey player.

I could get any woman I wanted.

A picture of a boob? Literally just a single boob?

There was no way that should have mattered at all.

Except it did matter.

Because it was Emily's boob.

Just one of her boobs and my heart was jumping around in my chest.

As though I had never seen a picture of a boob before.

I shook my head and tucked my phone into my back pocket.

I approached the building and looked for the door Emily said to look for.
She said it would be propped open.

It was.

I stepped into the school and smelled that *school smell*.

Paper, crayons, clean floors, maybe a touch of must from the old books in the library.

Every other light was turned on above my head as I walked down the hallway, my feet hitting and echoing around.

The walls were covered in projects by the kids.

Each room. Each teacher. Each class.

I eventually heard the echoing sounds of voices.

I approached the classroom slowly.

“... and that’s why I suggest an update to the curriculum.”

That was Candice’s voice.

Even though I only met her one time, she had that voice.

That damn annoying voice.

“As a teacher, I can speak for many others when I say-”

“Maybe that’s the issue...”

I didn’t like one bit that I just heard Candice cut off Emily.

That was my wife.

Nobody cut off my wife when she was speaking.

I turned the corner and stepped into the classroom.

Everyone there looked at me.

It was only about twenty people.

Not too bad.

A few people instantly recognized me.

A few didn’t.

Everyone stared.

Emily started to smile a little.

Candice - who was standing - pointed at me.

“Are you here to fix the lights?” she asked in a tone laced with the word *bitch*.

“That’s a good one, *candy cane*. Good to see you again.”

I winked and blew her a kiss.

Candice gasped and her face turned red.

I then set my sights on my wife.

“Sorry for interrupting the meeting,” I said. “Just got done at the gym and dealing with some hockey nonsense and I had to see my beautiful wife. Hope you all don’t mind.”

Emily then started to stand. “Rome, I told you not to come here tonight.” Emily let out a laugh. “This is an important meeting.”

“I know, sweetheart,” I said. “I’m sorry. I just couldn’t stop thinking about you.”

Everyone now sat with their jaws dropped.

Plenty of their faces turning red.

Obviously this was the realization that whatever rumors Candice had already began to spread... it was bullshit.

Or at least it had the perception as bullshit.

I walked right up to Emily and slid my right hand from her cheek to her back of her neck.

Her body stiffened and her eyes began to grow wide when she realized I was indeed going to kiss her.

See, she just wanted me to show up and act like myself.

Her exact text?

Just be you, Rome. Be goofy and dumb. Say something stupid but not sexual and inappropriate. These are my colleagues and my boss. But I want them to see us together. You know what I mean? You show up. Talk for a few seconds. I lovingly tell you to leave. It squashes all the rumors.

Now, I could listen.

But I also liked to improvise and make it well known that even though I was listening, I was still in full fucking control of this situation.

Hence the picture of Emily's beautiful left breast on my phone.

And hence the way I pulled her toward me and lowered my lips to hers for a kiss.

Now for show, the first kiss was soft and gentle.

That sweet, romantic kind of kiss.

A married couple kind of kiss.

I wasn't going to stop there.

And I didn't.

However, just as my tongue swept across her bottom lip, she pushed me away and let out a nervous laugh.

"Excuse us for a second," Emily said.

Emily grabbed my hand and walked me a little bit away...

"What are you doing?" she whispered.

"Playing into it."

"You have to go now. I just wanted you to show up and say a few things."

"It was just a kiss, Em."

"Smile when you're talking. So they think we're happy."

"I am happy. Looking at you..."

"Rome. Please leave. Okay? I live a few minutes away. You probably know that already. Just go there. I'll give you the code to my house. Okay? You can go inside and wait for me. Right?"

I nodded.

I smiled big.

I kissed her cheek. "Love you, Em!"

I made sure that was loud enough for everyone to hear.

Then I hugged Emily.

I rested my lips at her ear.

There was just one more thing to whisper. To tell her. In private.

“You leave me alone in your place... I can’t wait to see all the different kinds of panties you have, Em...”

Chapter Twenty-Two

EMILY



IF YOU EVEN SO MUCH AS **open a drawer... or touch my panties... I swear... I'll...**

I slid my finger across the screen and deleted the words.

You know what, Rome? You want to feel big and bad? Go for it. Snoop through my panties. Smell them all if you want. They're going to smell like my laundry detergent because they're clean! You idiot. Oh, and if you want to dig through my hamper and find a pair I've worn...

"Emily, are you okay?"

I stood at the table and smiled.

Gary - *Mr. Horndorf* - stared at me over the top of his glasses.

"I'm great," I said.

"You were presenting," he said with a nod. Then a smile.

"Yes. I was only suggesting we keep decisions like we're talking about down at the teacher level. I understand maybe that's not the *coolest* way to make decisions, but if we talk to the teachers, we get feedback. I think information and communication are best friends. Mr. Horndorf, I'm sure-

“Emily, please,” he said. “Call me Gary. This is an informal meeting. Right?”

“Okay. Gary.”

He’s never been this nice and casual with me before.

“I personally feel that whoever takes on these positions and this work, they need to view it as more than just a title. Or a paycheck. Or a stepping stone. At least to me, it’s that serious. I’m in the classroom. I see. I hear. I experience.”

“If I may just interject for a second,” Candice said. “I’m not sure I appreciate the assumption and the tone that-”

“We’re done listening to you for right now,” Gary cut in.

His stern gaze crushed Candice’s soul.

She withered like a thirsty flower in a heatwave.

And she looked shocked.

Her buddy Gary Horndorf never talked to her like that.

“Tell you what,” Gary said. “I could use a break. And to stretch my legs a little. Everyone take five. Or ten. Emily, talk with me?”

“Uh, sure,” I said.

I could feel Candice staring at me in disbelief.

Any time there was a break, she was right up Gary’s ass.

Not this time.

She sat at the table, looking at her phone.

I thought for a second or two I saw her bottom lip quivering.

I refused to feel bad for her at all.

Instead, I met up with Gary.

He touched my arm and smiled. “You’re married to a hockey player?”

“You know who Rome is?”

“Are you kidding me? I played hockey. All through college. I almost went pro.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. I was good. Very good. My parents had a private place for me to skate. Rich kid stuff.” Gary winked. “I ended up getting tangled up with someone in a game and tore up my knee really bad. Had to make the hardest decision of my life.”

“You had to walk away from the game.”

Gary nodded. “Anyway. I’m a big fan. Probably doesn’t show. Don’t let the suit and tie fool you.”

“Are you suggesting you have a *SOLA Empire* tattoo across your chest, Gary?”

He threw his head back and let out a laugh that almost shook the lights in the room.

I couldn’t believe how easy it was to schmooze someone when you knew their weak spot.

A part of me did feel a little dirty about it.

Then again, I was using the resources at my disposal.

I had no desire to tell anyone that I was secretly married. To Rome.

That was all Candice’s fault.

She tried to churn the rumor mill.

“What are the odds you think your hubby can sneak me a ticket or two here and there?” Gary asked.

“Depends on if I get the promotion or not,” I whispered to Gary.

I gave him a gentle elbow.

Just for fun.

He looked at me.

My heart began to sink.

You went too far, Emily!

Gary learned closer. “You just keep up the good work. And don’t let that pest interrupt you anymore.”

The pest meant Candice.

I glanced at *the pest*.

She scowled, still staring at her phone.

I wasn't done quite yet either.

If I was going to use Rome to my advantage...

Time to use the perks of being married for my own good.



I SAT DOWN and everyone looked at me.

An array of administrators.

A few people on the outskirts of the education system.

An accountant. *I think.*

A lawyer. *I was pretty sure of.*

“Okay,” I said. “Bring it on. I can feel everyone staring and thinking. Let’s hear it.” I made my move. “Candice. You were the one who figured it out first. Right?”

“What?”

“When you called me. You were all worked up. Remember? You found out I was married?”

Candice had never seen this side of me.

Hell, I had never seen this side of me.

Candice’s jaw dropped.

“Okay, I’ll say it,” someone said. “A hockey player? I had no idea. I’m a casual fan. But... Rome...?”

That was the person I thought to be a lawyer.

Christina.

Richardson? Richardsen? Richards?

“Yeah,” I said. “I know. It’s a surprise. I mean, if I wanted to be rude about it, I guess I would ask everyone here to spill a big secret in front of everyone. Just to see how it feels.” I smiled. “But I get it. Rome and I met a long time ago. It’s not exactly... look, nobody here has given a damn about

me until now. Because of him. See how that feels?”

Now I was the one throwing the guilt at all of them!

And it worked.

They all looked away for a second, full of shame.

“But here we are now,” I said. “I understand by hiding my marriage it’s now *a thing*. No need for that. I do apologize for Rome showing up like he did. He just wanted to make sure I got an extra kiss. With everything going on. In our lives...”

I had no idea who I had become.

Sprinkling the seeds of drama.

Waiting for these people to water it...

“Everything okay?” Christina asked. “If you don’t mind me asking.”

“It’s personal,” I said.

“Divorce?” Candice whispered.

“Pregnancy,” I said.

Candice stiffened and swallowed hard.

“That’s right,” I said. “I’ve been trying to have a baby for some time now. And it hasn’t been successful. Even with *IVF*. It’s a hard thing to face. When you want a baby. When you want a family. It’s...”

“Oh, you poor thing,” one of the administrators said.

She was older than me.

I’d guess sixty, at least.

Her chair scratched on the floor as she slid toward me.

She grabbed my right hand. “Now you listen to me, Elizabeth.”

“Emily,” I said.

“Of course. Forgive me. Emily. My daughter went through the same thing. She and her husband... it was hard to watch. May sound crazy, but the moment they just let it all go, it happened. I know it’s the last thing you would want to hear, but stress...”

“Like a promotion,” Candice threw in.

I looked at Candice. “Or a pest driving you nuts.”

That got a chuckle from everyone at the table.

Soon I had them all confessing their own stories of love, marriage, having kids, not having kids, and even divorce.

As it turned out, Christina was twice divorced.

First, from her high school sweetheart.

Then from his best friend!

And now she was talking with her first husband again.

She thought since they were older and had experienced life, maybe there was a spark there.

I had become the catalyst for a heartfelt meeting about life.

Everyone had put their walls down.

Even Gary himself... he sat casually and listened to all the stories.

I caught myself looking his way.

“I never meant to steal the night this way,” I said. “I do apologize for that.”

“No worries,” Gary said. “We’ve got a lot of work to do here. But it’s good to see a realness to it all. It’s good that people have their true selves to offer. In and out of the classrooms.”

Gary then leaned forward and flipped his tie over his right shoulder.

He folded his hands.

He smiled.

“Think our boys have a shot this season?” Gary asked.

Our boys? Who...

Oh.

He means the hockey team.

“I can’t predict the future,” I said. “I just know how much work Rome is putting in right now.”

“A hockey player,” someone else said.

That was Barbara.

One of the secretaries.

She hurried and covered her mouth.

Her cheeks were red.

“What about it?” Gary asked.

“Nothing,” Barbara said. “That just slipped out.”

“Doesn’t equate?” I asked. “A hockey player. A schoolteacher.”

“Seems made up,” Candice said.

“Not sure what other kind of proof you’d want, Candice,” I said. “Want to see a copy of our marriage certificate? Want to see the messy sheets in our bed?”

I winked at Barbara.

She giggled.

Candice scoffed.

Gary waved his hands in defeat.

He wanted to talk about hockey, not about the action between the sheets with Rome and me.

I felt an underlying embarrassment the entire time.

But as long as I stayed ahead of it, even an inch, I was fine.

In fact, tonight was one of the best nights ever for my career.

I hated that it came down to who I was married to and that I was having trouble getting pregnant.

Maybe Gary had been right when he said it was nice to see the real side of things.

I was proving to him I could handle a lot and still work. Still make decisions.

The meeting came to an end and everyone took the time to say goodbye to me.

My only plan had been to squash the rumors of me having some secret, scandalous marriage. Instead of lying about Rome, I jumped head first into it all.

And it paid off.

So much so that on the drive back to my condo, all I thought about was Rome.

How I texted him and he showed up.

Yeah, I know, I sent him a picture of a boob, but who cares? Like nobody else in the world right now is taking a picture of their boob or boobs to send to someone? Please.

It almost slipped my mind that Rome was at my condo waiting for me.

It wasn't until I got to the door that I remembered he was there.

Or maybe he's not there.

Why would he just sit around and wait for me...

I opened the door.

Rome was nowhere to be found.

Some of the lights were on.

"Rome?" I called out. "Are you still here?"

He stepped out of the bedroom. *My bedroom.*

He folded his arms, leaned against the open door, and smiled at me.

I had no idea if he was messing with me or if he had been going through my drawers.

That kind of thing should have definitely bothered me.

Only it didn't.

It made Rome sexier.

Him being his true cocky self.

And I liked it.

I dropped my bag to the floor.

I stepped out of my shoes.

And as I began to walk - *with speed* - toward my husband, I grabbed the bottom of my shirt and lifted it up over my head.

It landed somewhere on the floor.

I then flicked open the button on my pants.

Rome's eyes opened just a little bit wider.

I felt strong, powerful, in control.

Riding a high from that meeting.

And now I wanted to ride my sexy hockey player husband.

Chapter Twenty-Three

ROME



OH, believe me, I had seen the look in Emily's eyes before.

Just in other women.

A look of pure lust and desire.

That sense of instinctual craving and need.

The inability to control it.

It also helped that Emily was in her own condo.

She lunged for me and I pushed myself from the doorway and caught her.

I held her eye level and felt her body...

I wasn't even sure how to describe it.

I turned and put her against the door.

Pinning her there.

My hands grabbing for her ass, holding her.

I bent my knees a little and drove myself forward and up, making sure she felt the hardening swell of my cock.

As I moved in for a kiss, I watched her lips move.

So sweet and seductive.

Those innocent lips of hers...

I moved at the last second and kissed her neck.

Emily groaned.

I put her back on her feet, spun her around and pinned her against the door again.

I bent my knees again.

This time I drove my hard cock against her ass.

I rubbed my nose against the back of her head and toward her ear.

“Feel my cock, sweetheart?” I growled.

“Yes,” Emily said.

“You love when I grab you and turn you around, don’t you?”

“Only if you’re going to fuck me,” she said.

I did not expect the innocent schoolteacher to say that.

My hands moved up to the back of her bra and unhooked it.

I kissed the middle of her back, right over the mark left by her bra.

My hands slid around to her chest, cupping her breasts.

Fingertips kneading her skin.

Digging and twisting.

Going until she let out a whimpering groan, warning I had reached her threshold.

I stepped back and pulled her with me.

Her body crashed into mine.

My hands smothering her breasts.

She reached back and began to play with the thick bulge between my legs.

Slightly teasing me but mostly looking for my zipper.

I removed my right hand from her right breast and helped her out.

I unzipped my jeans and carefully wrestled my cock out.

Plopping it into the palm of her hand.

Feeling her fingers attempting to wrap tightly around it.

I looked down and watched her small hand tugging at my thickness.
My left hand moved up her chest and I gently touched her neck.
I felt her swallow against my touch.
Her hand started to move faster, stroking me.
I gritted my teeth and had a better idea.
I slapped my hands to her hips and spun her back around.
Emily let out a yell and had to release her hold on my cock.
Now she faced me.
My hands holding her hips tight.
I gave one tug. Down.
Her knees bent just the slightest.
“Ready, Em?” I asked.
She nodded.
I let her hips go and she fell to her knees on her own.
I slid my fingers into her hair and watched as she closed in on my cock.
Her sweet, innocent mouth open.
Her hands grabbed for my legs, nails digging through my jeans and into my skin.
My cock shivered with greed, waiting for her lips and tongue to taste me.
Now... my sweet and innocent wife...
The woman I married before I fucked her.
The woman I married before testing out what her mouth could do...
Emily looked up at me with eyes that could have stopped the world.
She had closed her mouth, lips licked tight together.
She then began to shake her head, as though she were telling me - *or maybe herself* - no. Her lips pressed against the tip of my cock, sliding back and forth.
Leaving me in a fit of teasing rage.
Every muscle in each of my legs tensed up.
I let my wife have her flirty fun for a few seconds.

That's when I grabbed her hair just a little bit tighter.

I pulled her lips away from my cock.

"Open up, Em," I said as I stared down into her eyes. "See how much you can take."

Emily parted her lips and I pulled her toward me again.

This time I sucked in a breath and exhaled it with a slow growl as I felt her lips sliding over my cock.

Her mouth was so tight.

Her tongue wiggling and wrestling, trying to make extra room. But there was none.

Her right hand moved up and touched the base of my cock.

As her eyes began to shut, she groaned.

I felt that vibration throughout my body.

Inside, I applauded her ability to enjoy the slow burn torture of pleasuring my cock.

She didn't attack it like someone who hadn't eaten in ten days and was just served a meal.

My sweet innocent schoolteacher of a wife had a nice naughty side to her.

Oh, and she could... take a lot...

I caught myself hissing as she took way more than I expected.

I felt her lips pulling at my skin.

I felt her teeth grazing my hardness.

She groaned.

I growled.

She knew the end result to this kind of thing.

My fingers gently inched down and dug into the back of her neck.

I then began to rock myself forward.

Little by little.

Softly thrusting against her mouth.

The head of my cock pressed against the back of her tongue and throat.

It seemed as though my beautiful wife had no limits when it came to this kind of thing.

Another sexy surprise from her.

She guided her mouth away from my cock, popping free in dramatic fashion.

The noise echoing for a split second.

Her lips smacking together.

A soft gasp for a full breath of air.

She then inched her way back to her butt, her hands on the floor, back slightly arched, her breasts on full display.

I stood towering over her, never letting my eyes leave her gaze as I unbuttoned my jeans and dropped them down.

I stepped out of them, then dropped to my knees.

I took my shirt off and tossed it toward her body.

Emily tore my shirt away.

I moved closer to her.

Her unbuttoned pants and panties were in my way.

For only another moment to two.

I grabbed with force and pulled.

Her pants and panties slid off.

There was a second of resistance as I watched as her panties clung between her legs.

Her sticky honey glistening and waiting...

Now I knew without a doubt my sweet and innocent wife had this fantasy brewing in her mind of me nestling my tongue between her legs and flicking up and down.

Kind of like repaying the favor...

I had other plans.

I knew just what to do and how to do it.

I had to catch Emily off guard.

Remind her of who was the sexual king.

So here's what I did.

As soon as she was fully naked, I moved forward.

Closing in on her.

At the last second - just when she thought I was going to dip my mouth down between her legs - I moved for her mouth.

I caught her with a deep passionate kiss.

She groaned into my mouth and thrust her hips.

As soon as she did that, my middle and ring fingers were stuck together and I fucked my fingers into her sweet slit with all the force I had to offer.

Sinking deep.

A depth she had no idea existed.

And with one curl of my fingers...

Emily let out a yell and began to come.



MELTING against my touch was just the start.

I teased her clit until she begged me to stop.

I had all intentions of getting her into her bed, but that just didn't work out for us.

She had that look in her eyes again and lunged for me.

I made a quick move and pulled her against me, then flipped our positions.

I then sat with my back against the door.

Emily on top of me.

Hovering with a look of shock in her eyes.

She reached down and grabbed my cock.

She guided herself down.

Greeting her pussy to my body.

Taking me extra slowly too.
Those first movements of us together took a while.
By the time she had everything I had to offer sheathed inside her body, I
felt myself ready to explode.
I called that off and touched Emily's sides.
Together... we fucked each other.
It really was just that simple.
She moved.
I thrust.
She thrust.
I moved.
I gave a grunting warning of what I could no longer hold back.
She clawed at my face, stared into my eyes, and rode me as I came.
My cock throbbing and pumping, over and over, and Emily didn't miss a
second of any of it.
I pulled Emily closer to me, stealing a kiss or two.
Her body slowly stopping.
She lifted her hips up and we were no longer together.
Her hands grabbed for my shoulders.
We stared at each other.
"Em," I whispered.
Without hesitation, she placed her right pointer finger to my lips.
A subtle way of telling me to shut up.
To not say a word.
To not do anything to make this moment anything other than what it was.
In reality, I had no idea what I wanted to tell her.
Or maybe somewhere the two of us were thinking the same thing.
Great sex. Hot sex. Amazing sex.
Unprotected.
Fingers crossed, let this time be 'the time' it all happens.

Never in my life did I imagine enjoying a post-sex haze and thinking about pregnancy.

But there I was.

Holding my wife in my arms.

Feeling her heart racing.

Listening to her breathing.

Secretly staring at her naked body - or at least the parts I wanted to see and could see.

She kind of curled up in my arms too.

In a matter of minutes she fell asleep.

I listened to her sleeping, so softly and so innocently.

That's when I felt my heart racing still.

Or for all I fucking knew, maybe there were other things happening in my heart.

Chapter Twenty-Four

EMILY



I HAVE AN IDEA.

Four words from Rome that nobody wanted to hear.

And as far as Rome and me near each other, the word *idea* was never something simple.

Such as the idea of getting married.

The idea of me going to see him to ask for a divorce.

The fact that we still haven't gotten divorced yet!

The idea of him putting a baby in my belly...

I have an idea.

Now to catch up to the moment those words slipped off his sexy and orgasm-inducing tongue...

At some point during the night, Rome took me to my bed.

All I remembered were my dreams of sucking his beautiful cock and then licking my lips in my sleep. For hours on end.

Until I finally woke and saw Rome next to me in my bed.

I was naked.

He was naked.

I didn't need even a fraction of a second to remind myself of what happened the night before.

I yawned, blushed, and demanded coffee.

The time it took for Rome to return with coffee, it was the amount of time I needed to hurry into the bathroom, empty my bladder, wash my hands and face, and try to tame my bed head just a little.

Hey. Marriage or not, Rome was a fucking gorgeous man and I did want to impress him.

I jumped back into bed, took a breath and Rome returned.

That's when he handed me a fresh cup of coffee and said...

I have an idea.

"Does it have anything to do with sex?" I asked.

Kind of teasing. Kind of not.

Rome sat on the bed, still completely naked.

Let me describe that sight for a second, please and thank you.

So there's Rome.

Naked.

Sitting on my bed.

A cup of coffee in his left hand.

His large hand and long fingers.

Veins in his hands, running up his forearms.

They disappear except for a little color into his shoulder.

It's all muscle too.

Forearms. Biceps. Triceps. Shoulders. Chest.

I mean I could just sit there all day and study him and never get bored for a second.

And then there's his cock.

His cock!

He just sits there with all the confidence in the world.

*Which I would have too if I had what he had between his legs.
His cock flaccid, resting near the inside of his right leg.
The damn thing practically half way down his thigh.
In a way it didn't seem possible it could get any bigger than it was, but
believe me, it did.*

It got a lot bigger.

Rome ran a hand through his hair.

He sipped his coffee.

Now he wouldn't even look at me.

“What is your idea, Rome?” I asked.

He licked his lips and looked at me.

I felt my lips suddenly feel... wet...

“This situation we're in. You know. Great sex. But no baby.”

“Oh,” I said.

“I know it's a sensitive topic.”

“Not to me. Speak your mind. I have no reason to dance around anything here.”

Rome nodded. “Take last night for example. That was amazing stuff, Em. But I was thinking. You were on top of me. Right?”

“Right. I was there. I remember.”

“Yeah. But when I finished and you lifted up and off...”

Rome paused.

I waited.

“You don't get what I'm saying?” Rome asked.

“I'm not sure.”

“Em, to put it blunt? You moved up off my cock and all my cum dripped out of you.”

Just like that, my cheeks were red hot and I almost dropped my coffee cup.

Rome hurried to put his right hand under my hand to make sure I didn't

spill my coffee on the bed or myself.

“I’m not sure how else to say it,” Rome said.

“No need. I heard you very clearly just now. Wow. I’m not used to that kind of dirty talk this early in the morning.”

“You think that’s dirty talk? That’s adorable.”

“Shut up, Rome. Get to your point. Okay?”

“Right. My point. I’ve been thinking about it. The idea of gravity. Which I just described. What happened.”

“Your point?”

“What if we reverse that? Give us a better chance of getting pregnant.”

Us? You’re saying ‘us’ getting pregnant?

I swallowed hard. “Care to explain some more?”

“Sure,” Rome said.

He quickly stood up, coffee cup in hand, beautiful cock dangling between his legs.

My eyes and body didn’t know what to do.

I was in shock. I was turned on.

This was maybe the greatest morning of my life already.

Rome placed his coffee cup down on the nightstand.

“Here’s what we do,” he said. “We do it upside down.”

“What?”

“We defy gravity. Or we... don’t use it... or we use it against itself...”

Rome began to think.

I couldn’t stop looking at his cock.

“Uh, Rome,” I said. “What are you trying to say?”

Rome crouched down and leaned against the side of my bed.

Oh. My. God. Why. Does. He. Look. So. Hot. Right. Now.

“We have sex again,” Rome said with a smirk. “But you have to be upside down. So when I... *go*... all my... *stuff*... stays inside your body.”

My eyes grew wide.

“I know it sounds crazy,” he said. “I’ve been thinking about it. It’s got to work, right? Or at least it’s got to help.”

“This is what you’ve been thinking about?”

Rome nodded.

I pondered it for a second or two.

Part of me thought... *duh. Of course he’s thinking about this. It involves sex. Rome’s entire life revolves around sex. And hockey. And since the season hasn’t started yet... it’s all sex.*

Yet at the same time?

It was kind of romantic. Kind of sweet.

Rome didn’t like letting me down.

I sipped my coffee.

I placed my coffee cup down on the nightstand next to my side of the bed.

Then I looked at Rome.

I bit my bottom lip.

I started to smile.

Rome jumped up, then he jumped up on the bed.

Worst case... at least I would get some great morning sex, right?



I ENDED up putting my hands out, touching Rome’s chest.

Stopping the moment before it began.

My husband’s impressive cock was already getting bigger. Harder.

The man can just command a boner that quick?

I had a couple rules to throw out to him.

The first?

No fancy and wild stuff.

I wanted him to get inside and finish.

Sure, we’d enjoy it, but no acrobatic nonsense.

The second rule was that he needed to tell me when it was time for him to finish.

I was not going to hang upside down off the bed the entire time.

With the way Rome fucked, I would end up passing out for sure.

And the third rule...

I needed to wear a bra.

That rule Rome didn't care for, but oh well.

I was not going to hang off my bed with him fucking and finishing and have my boobs hitting me in the chin or resting on my face.

It just didn't seem right. It wouldn't feel right.

And whether anyone liked it or not, there were certain angles for a woman that just didn't work.

Ever.

Those were my three rules.

Rome got a bra for me.

I put it on.

He then kissed my chest.

His nose flirted with my bra.

Growling as he did so.

Then his fingers began to explore between my legs.

No surprise to anyone how soaked I was.

No shame either.

I reached for his cock and gave him a hard tug.

"Now," I whispered.

Rome kissed up to my ear. "My sweet, innocent schoolteacher wife is so naughty..."

Rome took full control.

Grabbing my hips. Pulling me toward him.

My back on the bed, Rome hovering over me.

He moved between my legs and began to enter my body.

The rush of pressure.

The sensation of *fullness*.

I grabbed for the sheets and groaned.

I couldn't keep it to myself when it came to Rome.

I was not exactly the most vocal person in the bedroom.

Rome caused me to become... this.

I lifted my hips off the bed and arched my back.

I whispered dirty words and begged.

Oh, fuck, Rome.

It feels so fucking good, Rome.

Fill me, Rome.

Fuck me, Rome.

And that's what he did.

He started by holding my hips.

Thrusting with force.

Making each movement count.

He slowly moved his hands up my body, over my bra-covered breasts.

I could tell how much that annoyed him and I liked it.

Then he grabbed the side of the bed.

Something about that move was just over the top for me.

Moving harder and faster, the two of us instantly synching up together with movements and breaths, flirty gazes and stealing kisses when we felt like it.

It might have been the hottest sex of my life.

Even hotter than that first night with Rome when he kind of tossed me around...

Rome grunted and kissed me again.

He nibbled at my bottom lip and pulled away.

“Oh, fuck, Em. You ready for me?”

Hearing those words made my body quiver.

I couldn't believe how it happened from there.
I put my full trust into Rome as he kept going.
Inside my body I felt him getting thicker. Harder. Getting... *ready...*
Rome inched me closer to the edge of the bed.
His right hand touched my back as he kept guiding me.
Then he froze and sucked in a breath.
He kissed my neck, exhaled with a groan, and I felt him start to finish.
My jaw dropped and my toes curled tight.
His cock... pumping...
Rome then moved me off the bed.
I reached back to find the floor as Rome grabbed my hips.
When his cock slipped out of my body I let out a yelling cry.
It felt good. But I suddenly missed him.
Not to mention my body was also throbbing.
Wanting more.
Rome held my hips and held me upside down off the side of my bed.
The entire thing was absolutely crazy.
And I somehow let Rome talk me into it.
Just like marrying Rome.
Now look what was happening...
Yet in some weird way it didn't seem like the worst idea.
I mean, after all, I got to finish.
I got to have sex with a hunky hockey player.
There was no way I looked good hanging upside down off the side of my
bed.
Rome surprised me with a kiss just below my belly button.
I shivered and groaned.
Rome let out a deep breath, softly growling.
I closed my eyes.
Upside down... full of Rome's cum... and I felt myself ready to finish

again...



IT WAS GETTING to the point of hurrying to the pharmacy for a pregnancy test.

Of course, I didn't want to get one too early and make myself worry.

The upside down sex was a one-time thing for Rome and me.

But the sex itself?

Hardly a one-time thing...

I looked at myself in the mirror, bit my bottom lip and blushed.

I had never had such an active bedroom life before.

He couldn't get enough.

Neither could I.

One of my favorite ways...?

My dirty little secret with Rome?

I *loved* when he showed up after being at the gym.

I *loved* when he stunk like sweat and his muscles were even bigger and swollen.

I *loved* the way he grabbed me and took me.

I *loved* the way his skin tasted.

And most of all, I *loved* the way we'd end up in the shower and just...

I began to fan myself with my hands.

I checked the calendar on my phone again.

Mentally, I had a plan in place.

I knew exactly how many more days to wait before getting a pregnancy test.

I brushed my teeth and felt the urge to pee again.

Every time I had to pee I got excited that if I had to keep going maybe that was a good sign.

I had no idea if that made sense or not.

I sat down and took a deep breath.

Then I felt something.

Something no guy could feel or understand.

Something I had been so used to...

I gasped.

My toes curled on the bathroom floor.

My chin quivered a little as the sudden hit of what felt like defeat.

I had just gotten my period.

Just like that.

Out of nowhere.

Which was kind of how it went.

Only this time it felt like a punch to the stomach - *and not from cramping either.*

It meant I wasn't pregnant.

It meant the upside down sex trick didn't work.

It meant the constant sex with Rome didn't work.

Well, it worked... *it really worked...* I just wasn't pregnant.

Sadness hit me.

A weird sadness.

A sadness that suggested even though I was the one who wanted the baby, I felt like I just let my husband down.

Chapter Twenty-Five

EMILY



ROME SHOWED up after he was done at the gym.

His skin laced with sweat. And stinky.

That manly stink that I loved.

That I craved.

He opened the door on his own thanks to me giving him the code.

He walked through my condo to the kitchen. To the fridge. He opened the door, took out a beer, and twisted the cap off.

Acting as though he lived there.

He took a big gulp of the beer and then strutted toward me with a certain look in his eyes.

I had been so caught up on the word *disappointment* that I forgot what Rome was here for. Or what he thought was going to happen next.

It was kind of like a little dirty fantasy I enjoyed.

Him opening a beer, sweaty and smelly, coming after me.

The taste of the beer on his lips.

Him carrying me into the bathroom and tearing my clothes off so we

could shower together.

“Rome, you’re going to have to wait,” I said.

“How long, Em?”

“Five days. Seven days. Maybe a little more. Depending.”

Rome stopped. “What?”

“I should have texted you what was going on.”

“What exactly is going on?”

I touched my stomach and frowned. “Not this month.”

“Not...?”

“Rome, I got my period.”

“Oh,” he said. He glanced at my stomach. Then back to my eyes. “So...”

“No baby.”

“And you’re sure?”

“Want to feel for yourself?” I blurted out.

The vulgar words escaping my lips.

A little ball of rage peeled from the inside of my throbbing uterus and spread throughout my body.

It was like something took over my brain.

Rome. Enemy.

Destroy the enemy.

Destroy Rome.

Now.

The hormones say so.

Get him!

“Oh, you don’t believe me, huh?” I asked. “You think I’m making it up? Or, what, you want to be some cool and tough guy and stick your hand down my panties right now? Tell all your hockey idiot friends, *whoa, bro, I fingered a chick when she was on her period...?* You’re disgusting, Rome! Purely disgusting. And for that matter, let me guess. You just came over here to fuck me in the shower and leave. Right?”

Rome opened his mouth to respond.

The hormones suggested I never let Rome speak again!

“Don’t talk to me right now,” I yelled. “You can leave. How’s that sound? I’m not just someone you can fuck when you feel like it, okay? I’m a person, Rome. I have feelings. I like to do things. This isn’t some festival of sex in my condo, okay? I don’t even know who I am right now because of you. I’m starting to think your cock is possessed or haunted or something. It does things to me.”

“Makes you scream my name,” Rome said.

“Get out!” I growled. A sudden cramp squeezed and it felt like a shark had taken a big chunk out of my lower back.

I roared.

Like... literally roared.

Rome jumped back and took off toward the front door.

I chased after him.

“What the hell is this, Em?” he called out. “I’m not into this kind of kink or foreplay!”

“Everything with you is sex,” I growled. “I hate you, Rome. Get out of my house. You’re never going near my pussy again!”

Rome let himself out of my condo.

I lunged for the door and opened it.

“Rome,” I called out.

He looked back.

“Sorry about all that,” I said.

“I’ll check in with you later,” he said. “Unless you want me to stay. I can grab a shower. Alone. And I can order us something to eat.”

Oh, that sounds like heaven!

That was my heart.

My throbbing uterus spoke up louder.

I narrowed my gaze. “I can order my own food, Rome. I don’t need you

for anything!”

And that was that.

I shut the door.

I smacked it with an open hand.

My hand stung for a few seconds.

But then I opened the door again.

Rome was gone. Officially.

I curled my lip.

I whispered in my head, calling him a prick.

Then I started to cry.

I really wanted to be pregnant by Rome.



“HERE, JUST SIP ON THIS TEA,” Ellie said as she sat next to me on the couch.

“What’s it called?”

“*Ellie’s Anti-Bitch Period Tea*,” she said.

“You didn’t put some sleeping medicine in this, did you?”

Ellie shrugged her shoulder. Then she laughed. “You know how I feel about manufactured medicine. It’s all herbs in the tea. Herbs and tinctures. A wonderful mix. Root stuff. Universal.”

“So it’ll taste like shit,” I said.

“But it’ll help.”

“How? How will it help? Will it magically erase my period and then bring to life any leftover semen from Rome inside my body and throw it against my egg until it all connects?”

Ellie didn’t say anything else.

I felt guilty.

I lowered my head.

My apology to my best friend was to sip the tea she made for me.

Yes, it tasted like shit.

Shit laced with clove.

A spicy Halloween flavor.

I kept sipping it.

Then I looked at Ellie.

She was eager for my review.

I took a deep breath. "Calming."

"Yes. Exactly. Calming. Just keep sipping. I won't go too far and suggest we meditate together."

"Thank you."

Ellie inched closer to me. "I'm so sorry about what's going on."

"I'm not. I think you may be right. What am I trying to prove here, right?"

"What do you mean?"

"I want a baby, Ellie. Is this the right way to do it? I know it sounds weird... have a baby with my husband?"

"Well, yes, it's confusing."

"Is that what this is? Me sending out confusing signals? Confusing energy? Don't get me wrong, the sex with Rome is the best I've ever had. That I can easily admit. And he's definitely... you know... giving it his all..."

"There's a lot I could say but I won't. This is a moment of reflection and venting. Get it all out into the open. Maybe if we clear the air an answer will appear."

"Maybe I should just do what you said to do back when-"

My phone let out a loud dinging sound, meaning someone was at the front door.

The way my heart perked up seemed very concerning.

I wanted it to be Rome showing up.

Except it wasn't Rome at all.

"Candice," I growled.

"Just ignore her," Ellie said.

"Can't do that. She'll keep bothering me. Then she'll start a rumor. I'll handle this pest myself."

"Pest?" Ellie asked as I stood up.

I handed Ellie the stinky, shitty tea she made for me and I set my sights on Candice.

I wasn't in the best condition to face someone like Candice.

Bloated. Crampy. Tired. Annoyed.

Not pregnant.

Confused about being not pregnant.

And here was my enemy.

I opened the front door and Candice smiled ear to ear.

"Hey, sleepy head," she said. "Look at you all relaxed looking. Must be nice!"

A slight squeal in her voice did me in for good.

"Candice, get the fuck away from my place," I growled. "And stay the fuck away from me. You got that? You want to try to spread rumors about me? Talk about my marriage? About my life? All for your benefit? You know what you are? You're a cunt!"

Candice gasped and stepped back. "Emily..."

"I'm going to bury your ass. You got that? I'm going to get this promotion and kick ass at it. I'm going to find some rule or law or something that allows me to ban you from ever talking to me again. Now get the fuck away from me before I do something really stupid..."

I opened my eyes wide and I took maybe half a step toward Candice.

She let out a scream, threw her hands up into the air, then took off running.

"I think you need something stronger than tea," I heard Ellie say from

behind me.

I nodded in agreement.

I was certainly on a roll lately with chasing people away from my condo.

With Candice, at least she was someone I didn't like. Someone I didn't want to see.

But with Rome...

It was fun and flirty to kick him out.

Him staying and getting closer to me... only there was a greater chance of me falling for him...

... and actually getting pregnant.

Chapter Twenty-Six

ROME



HENRY GAVE me a quick heads up.

We all know...

Those three words were all I needed.

There was no escaping the situation either.

The time had officially come to get back on the ice as a team.

The off-season went by quick - yet it lingered forever at the same time.

For this year, it was different.

Being near Emily so much...

I stepped out of my car and felt the hot sun smack me in the face.

Then I walked into the building and felt the chill of the air conditioning.

The faint smell of the ice.

I knew what would happen when I opened the locker room door, so I just went for it.

I tore open the door, stepped inside, and saw all the guys standing there.

Atlas. Jago. Sebastian. Henry. Joe.

All staring at me.

I took a deep breath and dropped my bag to the floor.
I opened my arms slowly and gave a nod and a smile.

“Let me have it,” I said.

Everyone stood in silence.

That made everything feel worse.

I expected them to scream, cheer, come after me.

But to just stand there. Saying nothing. Staring.

Sweat actually began to collect on my forehead.

I grew nervous.

I swallowed hard.

“Guys?” I asked.

They all remained standing there.

“Okay, fine. Yeah. It’s true. Not sure what you heard or how or whatever... but I’ll come clean.” I ran a hand through my hair. “I’m married. Okay? I’ve been married for some time now. It was one of those things. Nothing serious. Nothing real. I’m still Rome. Everything that’s happened... it’s all true. Jago, you’ve seen plenty. Right, my man?”

Jago blinked.

I moved my attention to Henry.

“Henry. Talk to me. Say something. I don’t like this. You all just staring at me. Okay? I’m allowed to do whatever I want to do with my life. Okay? Don’t stand there, fucking judging me. You’re all one to talk. Huh? Am I right? Huh?”

Nobody said a word.

“Okay, fine. I’ll do it. I’ll say it. You ready for this? Atlas. You got a woman pregnant on a fake date! Sebastian. Didn’t you screw your best friend’s sister? And then marry her? Oh, hey there, Joe. Sleeping with your ex? Who is also your shrink? Smart move there, big guy. And, hey, look. It’s Jago! The guy who marries a woman because he wanted to make another goalie jealous! Then there’s Henry.” I frowned. “Henry. What the hell is your

problem, Henry? Huh? Are you just some good boy all the time or what? Don't you live a little in life?"

"Are you done now?" Atlas asked in a deep voice that shut me right up.

"Yeah," I said.

Atlas looked at the other guys.

One nod later, they all walked toward me.

I kept my arms open, thinking they were going to hug me.

I had no idea why I thought that.

Or why I stood there waiting.

They all walked around me.

In full gear.

Ready to hit the ice.

They left me in the locker room by myself.

It almost felt like I had just gotten into trouble.

I quickly got changed and scrambled to get out to the ice.

I had more to say to these assholes.

These guys were supposed to be like brothers to me.

And they wanted to treat me like this?

I took to the ice, fire and venom mixing together, poised to unleash...

Atlas, Henry, Joe, Sebastian, and Jago all stood waiting for me.

As soon as they saw me...

They began to clap.

They began to cheer.

Jago pulled a sign out of nowhere.

It was a JUST MARRIED sign but he hand wrote FOUND OUT YOU ARE in between the JUST and the MARRIED.

"Are you going to tell us what the hell is going on in your life?" Sebastian asked.

I smiled ear to ear.

A classic Rome smile.

“Not a fucking chance in hell, Sebastian.”



I STOLE the puck from Atlas and worked my way into a nice breakaway.

I skated down the ice and made a sweet deke move on Jago and put the puck up and over his shoulder.

Jago threw his mask back and off his head.

I winked at Jago and looked back just in time to see Atlas flying toward me, rage in his eyes.

I threw my stick and gloves to the ice, ready.

There was no being ready for Atlas when he wanted to hurt you though.

I readied myself for a hit that would probably keep me off the ice for at least half the season.

At the last second, Atlas dug his skates into the ice and somehow stopped without killing me.

He stood over me.

He smacked his stick to the side of my left leg.

“Nice move,” he said. “Work on that more. Your grip was a little loose. You don’t want to drop your stick in the middle of a play.”

Atlas turned and skated to the bench.

That’s where Coach Denny waited for him to rip him apart for giving up the puck to me.

Jago looked at me. “Married? This entire time?”

“It’s a long story.”

“Spill.”

“No way, brother.”

“That’s bullshit. I want to know about it.”

“Why? Afraid I’ll steal your thunder? Or actually, I think you stole mine. You copied me.”

“Without knowing,” Jago said.

“There’s got to be more to it,” Henry said as he skated by me. “I can sense it. I can smell it.”

Coach Denny blew his whistle.

We ran another hour of plays and then he got pissed when Jago missed a very easy shot.

Coach Denny broke his clipboard and that was how practice ended.

It felt good to be back on the ice.

To skate. To take shots. To take some hits.

My body ached as I took a shower.

As soon as I looked down at my cock my mind shifted back to my wife.

My sweet and innocent schoolteacher of a wife.

Emily.

A very non-pregnant Emily.

That thought smacked me hard in the face and stung.

It stung so much that Henry came up to me after practice and blocked my way.

“What’s going on?”

“Henry.”

“I’m not like these other guys. You know that. What’s going on?”

I looked around the locker room.

Everyone had already left.

In a hurry too.

Gone were the days of sitting around in a pool of sweat, sneaking a beer or two, and then showering and going out to raise some hell.

It was like time had moved on.

Or we all as guys had moved on.

Which wasn’t a bad thing.

Having kids.

Getting married.

Being secretly married.

Henry grabbed two chairs and smacked them hard to the floor.

He sat down and kicked the other chair.

I plopped down.

“Henry,” I said.

“Rome,” Henry said.

“You’re too serious to be on this team.”

Henry laughed. “I keep you guys grounded.”

“You have to have something in the background. Some dark secrets or something. Right? Or someone you loved. Someone you left behind. A wife? Kids? A dog?”

“You’ve been married for a long time, huh?”

“It was never anything serious. I actually just started talking to her again.”

“What prompted that?”

“Funny enough, she wanted a divorce.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah. She’s trying to get pregnant. She has a friend who believes in all that universal hippy crap. So she thought by getting a divorce from me it would help her get pregnant.”

“So she has someone else in her life?”

I shook my head.

Henry lifted an eyebrow.

“She was handling things on her own,” I said. “Until she ran into me.”

“Meaning?”

“Meaning I’ve been the steady supply of *baby making juice*,” I said.

“Wow.”

“Yeah. Big deal. I’ve been fucking my wife.”

“You’ve been trying to have a baby with your wife. A wife you haven’t talked to in a long time.”

“Don’t start twisting things around, Henry. You know how I am. How I live. I’m not you. Okay?”

“And your wife is okay with this?”

“Are you suggesting something bad about my wife? If you are, I will break your jaw.”

“Ah,” Henry said with a grin. “So you have feelings for her.”

“What?” I asked, jumping up, knocking the chair over. “Feelings? The only feeling I have or enjoy is when her perfect plump pussy is wrapped around my cock.”

Henry folded his arms. “So why isn’t she pregnant?”

“Because she has her period.”

“Meaning...”

I let out a sigh. “Two months now. Nothing has... caught on.”

“That’s why you’re in a funk. Or look bummed out. You care, Rome. You don’t want to let her down.”

“I’m not letting anyone down. I’ve done my part. I get hard. I shoot a load. That’s it.”

“You know it’s more than that, Rome. You’re not that dumb.”

I picked up the chair and spun it around and straddled it. “Fine. Okay, Henry. You want to get real? I’m pissed off. Why hasn’t she gotten pregnant yet? Huh? Is there... is there something wrong with me? You know?”

“You mean with your...”

“Not my dick. My dick is fine.”

“But your *stuff*.”

“I don’t know. I mean, she didn’t get pregnant before she was with me either.”

“It’s bothering you.”

“Yeah. A little. I don’t know. I mean, whatever. She wants to get a divorce. I guess.”

“She still does? She’s said that?”

“Look, I don’t need this right now, Henry. I’ve already said way too much.” I stood up. “Keep this between us.”

“Sure. And, hey, congrats on being married.”

“Yeah. It’s been a fun ride.”

Henry laughed.

I walked to the door and he called out my name.

“You know, there are things you can do,” Henry said.

“Like?”

“You can go get your *stuff* tested. Make sure things are happening.”

“You mean jerk off into a cup?”

“Yeah, Rome. That’s what I mean. Jerk off into a cup.”

I scoffed and stormed out of the locker room and out of the building.

I got into my car and peeled out of the parking lot.

As I drove, I reached down with my left hand and squeezed my cock.

Things are good down there, right?

I get hard.

I shoot loads.

I fill Emily up each time she asks or whatever.

I continued to drive.

I kept my left hand between my legs, cradling my cock and balls.

What Henry suggested wasn’t the worst thing in the world.

Get my swimmers tested.

Make sure they were big and strong, flowing and fighting and all that.

It just all felt weird.

I went from partying at strip clubs to now worrying about my sperm count and strength.

Look what marriage has done to me!

Chapter Twenty-Seven

ROME



I STARTED the car and Emily reached for the steering wheel.

I looked at her. “Oh, Em, I know my cock is big but it’s not up there. Reach down.”

She swallowed hard. “I guess I can’t respond to that. You need a full tank, right?”

“Damn, sweetheart. You throw out just the right amount of dirtiness to keep me interested.”

“Can I talk now, Rome? Can I be serious now?”

“What?”

“You don’t have to do this, Rome. I didn’t ask you to do this. I don’t want you to do this.”

“Are you jealous?”

“Jealous of what?”

“That my sperm is going to go inside a cup instead of your body?”

Emily groaned and let go of the steering wheel and shook her head as she sat back in her seat.

I had kind of pushed too hard with the dumb joke stuff.

I didn't drive.

I sat there.

I collected some thoughts and words.

"Consider this something I am demanding I do," I said. "Okay? Just so I know for sure. No, it's some vanity thing. Not, I'm going to make t-shirts that say *MY CUM IS CLEARED FOR BABY MAKING* and give them away to any good-looking woman with a nice pair of tits. Okay, Em?"

"Then why?"

I touched my jaw. "Truthfully? I'm not sure why." I looked at her again. "That's the truth. A part of me doesn't want to let you down. I don't want to have bad sperm. I just want to know what's going on. You know, figure things out. One by one. Doing it together."

"I wanted a divorce," Emily said. "And now I'm going with you to an appointment to get your sperm checked."

"I'm not sure why that's shocking. I am Rome."

"Yeah, I know that. But don't forget, we didn't know each other before we got married. This is still kind of new to me."

"Fair point, sweetheart. So let me break this down. We're going to drive to this medical place. I'm going to get a cup and I'm going to go into a private room. I'm going to jerk off and shoot a load into the cup. I'm going to twist on the cap and hand it off to some person. It's going to be weird, even for me. But they're going to test it and let me know what's going on with my sperm."

"Then what, Rome? They tell you that your sperm is wonderfully active and it's my body that's all messed up? Then what? We get divorced and you take off?"

"You know, Em, the more I get to know you, the more I'm wondering if you aren't enjoying being married to me. You want to be near me. You don't like that I'm doing something *right* for once in my life."

“Hey, Rome?”

“Yeah?”

“Can you just stop talking now and drive?”

I smiled and did as my wife said to do.

I didn't make it a mile before Emily placed her left hand onto my right hand.

My sweet, innocent schoolteacher wife showing affection.

Which was good.

As crazy as I was in life, the idea of *smacking my sausage* in a room with people outside the room, knowing what I was doing...

I feared for some stage fright.

I hoped they had some good material for me to watch.

Or I could just use my phone.

Or I could just use my wife.



AS SOON AS the woman behind the desk recognized me, I wished I had gotten my agent and lawyer involved. To help protect anything from getting out about me.

Not that I normally cared.

And for that matter... *calling my agent and lawyer so I could jerk off?*

It was a lot.

In reality, I wasn't sure I cared if anything got leaked.

Want to write an article about me? Go for it.

Want to post on social media that I was jerking off? Go for it.

Want to take a selfie with my cum? Go for it.

I kept a smile on my face and kept the same happy-as-hell Rome attitude.

Everyone was professional about the ordeal.

I mean, it wasn't like this place was just for jerking off into cups.

It was a medical facility.

Then came the moment a nurse escorted me to a room.

She handed me a plastic cup with a lid.

“You know what to do next,” she said. “Finish up, put the lid on it...”

“I got it,” I said. “I got this.”

Next thing I knew I was in a room.

By myself.

I knew there were people all around on the outside.

It really wasn't much different than being in a hotel or an apartment building.

Right?

I looked at the cup.

I looked at my phone.

Without getting too personal into my past, this would not end up being the weirdest place I had jerked off.

Even still...

I felt my balls tightening and trying to climb up into my body.

Twisting off the tubes, refusing to give up some fresh sperm.

I took a breath and closed my eyes.

I took a few deep breaths.

Okay, Rome.

You've got this, big guy.

Think about Emily.

Think about your wife.

How fucking sexy is she, right?

Oh, what's happening now? She's taking her shirt off.

She's wearing a button-down shirt.

She's staring at you, her hair in a messy bun on the top of her head.

Oh, wait, she's only wearing that button-down shirt.

No. There's panties too.

That's right.

Yeah.

She unbuttons all the buttons.

The shirt is undone, leaving a stripe of bare skin.

God, her breasts are amazing.

Even if they're still covered.

Her panties are a light purple color.

She touches her fingertips just above her belly button and runs them up her body.

She pulls the right side of the shirt away, revealing her right breast.

That was certainly helping.

My cock began to throb and swell.

I grabbed the zipper on my jeans and hurried to get this party going.

The sooner I got this going for real, the sooner it could end.

Leave my warm, sticky surprise in the cup and be done with it all.

I pulled my cock out of my jeans and stroked slowly.

Pulling and squeezing, taking a deep breath.

Okay, that feels good.

Yeah. That feels really good.

Now, back to Emily.

Standing there with her right breast showing.

She's such a little devil.

So sexy.

Oh, wait, look at her now...

She moves the left side of the shirt out of the way.

Now both breasts are showing.

She lets the unbuttoned shirt fall down to her elbows.

Then she hugs her arms together. A little.

Her breasts squeezing together.

Her rich pink nipples staring at me.

Everything so symmetrically perfect and delicious looking.

I pulled at my cock and took a deep breath.

It felt good.

But it wasn't...

I stopped and looked down at my cock.

He was hard. He was throbbing.

I took a deep breath.

I had the sudden realization of what I was doing.

Forget about the whole jerking off into a cup thing.

That was medical. That was for science.

I couldn't believe I was jerking off thinking about Emily.

About my wife.

More so... she was right outside the door.

What the hell am I doing here?

I had to unbutton my jeans and wrestle my cock away.

I zipped and buttoned up.

I carefully opened the door and poked my head out.

Nobody was around.

Just go back inside, Rome.

Nobody is near you.

Nobody is watching or spying or anything.

Just use your phone.

Pull up a video.

Get it over with.

I craned my neck a little bit.

Then I had an idea.

I shut the door.

I grabbed my phone.

But I didn't look at a dirty movie.

I texted Emily.

Need you. ASAP. Emergency.

I texted what room I was in.

Then I texted for her to just walk back.

I needed her.

Again...

ASAP. EMERGENCY.

I waited for the gentle knock at the door.

I opened it and saw Emily.

Looking very worried.

I quickly grabbed her by the waist and pulled her into the room.

I shut the door and I kissed her.

Emily put her hands to my chest and pushed. "What's wrong?"

"I need you," I said.

I kissed her again.

I picked her up off her feet and turned her away from the door.

I pinned her against the closest wall and put her on her feet.

Without wasting a second, I reached between my legs and unzipped my jeans again.

Emily broke the kiss and gasped. "Rome..."

I kissed down to her neck. "I can't... without you..."

"You can't...?"

I looked at my wife. "Em, this is fucking weird."

"I thought guys could just jerk off whenever they wanted."

"Yeah. That's mostly true. But why would I jerk off alone when I have you here?"

"You can't be serious right now. You want to..."

"I need you, Em," I whispered.

"We can't have sex," she whispered. "You can't... you know... inside me. Or mix things or whatever..."

"Fuck, it was so sexy that you just went to sex," I said. "You look at me

and you think of sex, Em. You're driving me crazy."

Her cheeks turned red.

"Don't worry, sweetheart," I said. "No mouth either. Can't have you swallowing the evidence needed."

"Rome..."

"What?" I asked. "I need my wife right now. I need you to just be there. Let's fucking kiss like crazy. You might have to lift your shirt and bra for a little bit. I'll handle all the work."

Emily's bottom lip began to shiver.

"Wait a second," I whispered. I gently rubbed the tip of my nose to hers. "You've never done this before? You've never watched a man... pleasure himself...?"

Emily was like a frozen block of ice.

Blushing so beautifully.

That innocence of hers... making me even harder.

Now I knew for sure I'd have no issues at all filling up the *cum cup*.

See - all I needed was my wife.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

EMILY



“ROME, I NEED A SECOND,” I said in a breathless voice.

Rome kissed my neck one more time and moved out of the way.

I looked down for a second and saw his thick cock in his large hand.

This is really happening...?

I stepped forward and took a deep breath.

Right next to me was the plastic cup that Rome needed to orgasm into.

I looked around the windowless room.

I had no idea if I was technically allowed in the room.

Probably not.

I had no idea if what Rome wanted to do was illegal.

Probably not.

Yet in the back of my mind, I kept picturing how this would play out...

Local schoolteacher.

Caught in a sexual act in public with a hockey player.

But he's my husband!

I was just helping him come into a cup!

It's for a good reason!

I want to have a baby!

I need to know if his semen is strong or not!

“Em,” Rome said. “I don’t think this is a *rent-the-room-by-the-hour* kind of thing. I’m supposed to be going here. You know what I mean?”

I spun around. “And what am I? Like a pizza place? I have to deliver in five minutes or it’s free?”

Rome stood there with his cock in his hand.

It was kind of unfair how sexy he was.

It was also a little unfair how much I enjoyed being with him.

No matter the situation.

I closed in on my husband and grabbed his wrist.

“Move,” I whispered.

Rome released his grip on his cock and put his hands up.

I took a deep breath.

I grabbed his hard and heavy cock and curled my lip.

“Come for me, Rome...”



ROME LEANED against the wall and let out a long breath of relief.

My hand traced all the way down his long length to his heavy root.

I paused and squeezed.

I began to pump.

Almost yanking at him.

Whatever it took to get this process moving toward the end.

Not that I wanted him to finish quick, but I figured at some point someone would come looking for him to see if he was finished or not.

I jumped up to my toes and tried to kiss his neck.

I needed a fucking step stool.

Why does he have to be so tall and so big and so muscular and why does his cock have to be this amazing?

I gave up on trying to kiss his neck and just rested my forehead against his strong chest.

I stared down and watched my hand move.

Sliding up and down his cock.

The steel-like feel of him in my hand.

Pulling and grinding my hand...

I paused for a second to grip him from under his shaft.

Pointing his cock almost straight up at me.

I moved faster. And harder.

“You have to tell me when,” I whispered. “So we don’t make a mess.”

“Oh, fuck, Em, you’ll know when it’s time,” Rome groaned.

My toes curled in my shoes.

I thought I was going to pass out.

In the next shuddering breath, Rome decided to take complete control of a situation he asked me to take control of.

My husband grabbed my hips and we exchanged positions.

Meaning I was the one up against the wall now.

My hand still holding his cock, but now frozen for the moment.

His left hand grabbed the bottom of my shirt and began to lift.

He smirked at me.

I nodded.

Anything, Rome. My body is yours. Whatever you need...

He pushed my shirt up.

His fingertips moved aggressively, under my bra, exposing my right breast.

His right hand moved across his body and he cupped my breast.

Now I put my head back and stared at the ceiling, desperate not to let out a loud groaning sound.

At some point my hand started to move again.
Faster. Harder. Squeezing. Pulling. Tugging. Stroking.
Rome, come for me!
Rome let out a growl as he squeezed my breast.
I whimpered.
I bit my bottom lip.
A moment later I felt his breath teasing my nipple.
Then the flick of his tongue.
I gasped and looked down to see my husband latching onto my breast.
Engulfing me into his mouth.
Suckling with force.
His tongue racing in all directions against my nipple.
My knees shook.
I felt like I was going to come too.
“Rome,” I purred. “Rome...”
His right hand vanished from my breast.
It wrapped around my hand.
The hand stroking his cock.
Rome pulled away from my breast with a loud kissing sound.
He then began to use his hand and my hand together to stroke his cock.
Strong and powerful strokes.
Thrusting his body against his own touch.
Just using my hand as the in between.
I couldn’t believe the way it felt for me.
I felt Rome’s tongue roll across my nipple again.
He growled.
That was all I could take.
I was only human after all.
I was a woman.
Turned on. With needs.

And if I was going to go down this path of pure craziness, then why not run down it?

I used my left hand and slipped my fingers down the front of my pants.

Now that caught Rome's attention.

He looked at me.

I watched his eyes growing wider.

A smile on his face.

"We're doing this, Em," he whispered.

"We are," I said.

I felt my fingertips ease against my wetness.

My clit shivered, ready for any attention it could get.

Believe me, I would have preferred Rome's fingers. Or tongue. Or cock.

I was already too far gone though.

The first stroke of my own touch and my hips jumped forward.

A signal sent throughout my entire body.

The depths of my core calling for an orgasm.

"Holy shit," I said.

Rome kissed me to shut me up.

I groaned into his mouth.

His left hand kneaded my breast, teasing and playing.

His tongue flirting with my tongue and my lips.

His hand pumped faster and faster, squeezing a little tighter with my hand each second that passed.

My fingertips glided and danced against my clit.

My hips rocking, the backs of my legs shaking.

I had zero shame when I reached my climax.

I didn't care how quick it was.

It just felt so fucking good to come.

I ended up biting Rome's bottom lip and just holding there, my eyes shut, feeling the waves of pleasure tearing through me.

Rome kept his hand - and my hand - moving.
My fingers slowed to a sultry play and then I slid them out of my pants.
Rome broke his lips away from mine.
“Give me it,” he said.
“Give you...?”
“Your fingers,” he said. “I want to taste your pussy.”
My jaw dropped.
And I did as I was told.
I lifted the pointer and middle fingers of my left hand to Rome’s mouth.
He attacked.
Taking my fingers into his mouth.
Suckling my own wetness off them.
My inner thighs quivered and I honestly thought I was going to have a second orgasm.
Rome pulled his mouth away and growled.
He then stepped back and moved my hand from his cock.
It’s time.
I stood there and watched as Rome turned around.
Never in fifty lifetimes would I have guessed this moment...
Rome’s back flexing as his right hand stroked and his body finished.
Hearing those soft grunts of his.
The way his ass tightened against his jeans.
It was a wonder I didn’t stuff my fingers back down my pants and panties and touch myself again.
Rome was completely ruining me.
In the best way possible.
Or maybe it was the worst... I wasn’t sure.



I LOOKED at the cup and felt my cheeks warm up.

Rome held it up and shook it. “What do you think? Are they swimming?”

Blushing, I opened the door and snuck out of the room.

I stopped off at the women’s restroom to wash my hands and splash cold water on my face.

Then I walked back to the waiting room area.

The woman behind the desk looked at me.

I had no idea what she knew, didn’t know, or thought.

Not that it mattered.

But I felt like I had it written across my forehead.

I just played with my clit while I jerked my husband off!

Before I could casually sit down and grab a magazine and pretend to read it and not think about how insane what just happened was, Rome appeared.

“All finished!” he announced for everyone to hear.

And then he wiped his hands together and on his jeans.

I was mortified. For him.

But he just smiled big and strutted with all the confidence in the world.

He walked right up to me, put his arm around me and led the way out of the building.

Outside to the warm sun and then to his car.

He opened the passenger door for me.

I watched him walk around the front of the car.

My eyes followed him, not blinking once.

He got into his seat and started the car.

Just like earlier, I grabbed the steering wheel.

“Ut-oh,” he said. “Am I in trouble?”

I shook my head.

“I bet I can figure this out. I bet you’re insanely turned on still. You can’t believe what just happened. And just for the record, I’ve never donated sperm or had my sperm checked. Which means that was a first for me too. Congrats

on that, Em. I'll never forget it. I bet you won't either."

I looked at Rome.

He stared at me.

"I know, Em. It was wild and hot. It's okay to live in that moment. And, hey, it's totally cool to tell Ellie. I mean, if you want. Unless, of course, this wasn't the first time for you. For all I know maybe you give out hand jobs to dudes getting their sperm checked. You know, like a volunteer thing?"

I wanted to tell him to shut up.

Instead, I pulled at the steering wheel and pulled myself right to him.

I kissed him.

A deep kiss.

A slow kiss.

The kind of kiss that sent butterflies throughout my entire body.

I went to pull away and Rome dug his fingers into the back of my hair, twisted, and wanted more.

So I stayed there, leaning across his car, making out with him.

Feeling my panties twisted and stuck between my legs.

Knowing his cock rested between his legs.

The memory of that wild moment between us.

But it was more.

Oh, fuck, it was so much more than that.

Something happened.

Either on the drive here.

Or when I grabbed his cock.

Or maybe when I touched my clit.

Or maybe it was when I watched him come into the cup.

Or maybe it was the kiss we were having right now.

But something happened.

It was officially official.

I was falling in love with my husband.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

ROME



PRACTICE ENDED with a fight between me and Joe.

We were all playing with a little bit of a grumpy edge.

I figured each of us had something on our minds.

Or maybe our bodies were just tired from getting back into the swing of things.

Coach Denny kept egging me on the entire time.

Wanting me to do something spectacular.

So I finally did.

I took on Joe and hit him with a dirty shot to steal the puck.

I made a great pass to Sebastian, who took a shot on net, which Jago saved.

A fantastic save.

I was ready to celebrate Jago's save when I felt something hit my upper back.

I went down to the ice, then jumped up and turned.

Joe and I just went at it.

Throwing punches like it was a game and we were enemies.

I clipped Joe's chin.

He caught me in the nose.

That drew some blood.

My nose wasn't broken or anything though.

Atlas and Henry broke up the fight and Coach Denny told us get into the locker room.

So I sat there and watched Coach Denny pace the room.

Hands on his hips.

Looking at each one of us.

"How about a beer?" he finally asked. "That work for everyone?"

"How about some whiskey?" I called out.

"Need a bandage for your *boo boo* nose?" Atlas asked with a grin.

"What's up, big man? Hazel still running dry? Told you to tell her to think of me."

I winked.

Atlas jumped up.

Coach Denny pointed at Atlas. "Sit down. You shit on him first."

Coach Denny had a case of cold beer stashed in the locker room.

He tossed bottle after bottle until each of us had a drink.

"Twist 'em off, boys," he called out.

The echoing *psst* sound of the caps twisting off seemed to lighten the mood.

I glanced at Joe.

He stared right back at me.

I lifted my bottle and nodded.

He nodded back.

And that's how you took care of issues in hockey as teammates.

No need for Joe and I to have any issues.

It was just hockey.

“Cheers to whatever happens next,” Coach Denny said. “You guys keep that intensity going from practice into the season... we’re going to be a strong team. A pissed off team. A team that wins games. That’s our identity this season. Pissed off. Hungry. Got it?”

We all nodded.

We drank, told dumb jokes, and I answered a few more questions about being married.

The allure of it had worn off already.

I figured the guys either forgot, didn’t care, or maybe they just didn’t believe me.

After all, I was Rome.

I told big stories.

And even if they did believe I was married, they probably assumed it was all a big joke.

Which it had been.

Right up until Emily showed up at my front door.

Wanting a divorce.

Because she wanted a baby.

Next thing I know, I’m jerking off into a cup...

After a cold beer, I went to take a just-as-cold shower.

I stood with the water hitting the middle of my back.

The exact spot where Joe hit me and took me down.

That icy, knife feeling wasn’t all that bad.

I stood with my cock in my hand.

Flaccid and resting.

Like I was saying goodbye to a beloved pet.

My mind full of thoughts.

Way too many damn thoughts.

I was so distant, I didn’t hear or see Henry sneaking up on me.

“Hey, you okay?”

When I heard the voice, I swore it was my cock talking to me.

Worse than that, I almost responded.

I heard a whistle and I knew my cock could not whistle.

No way in hell.

I looked over my shoulder and I saw Henry.

“You good?” Henry asked. “Something bad happen to the big guy?”

I stepped from the shower and turned.

I let my cock flop freely.

“You tell me,” I said. “Everything okay?”

Henry looked up. “Rome, I’m not looking at your dick.”

“Please? As friends? As hockey brothers?”

“What do you think is wrong with your dick?”

“Nothing. I don’t know. I, uh, I did the thing. I jerked off into the cup. Actually, my wife helped me.”

Henry looked at me. “What?”

“Long story. I have to go get the results today.”

Henry’s eyes didn’t leave mine. “You know that has nothing to do with your dick itself, right?”

“Why are you so afraid to look at my cock? You’ve seen other guys cocks before. What’s the big deal?”

Henry sighed.

His eyes moved down for a second.

Then back up.

“And?” I asked.

“You have a great dick. Your wife must be thrilled.”

“She is. She’s wild. Innocent yet wild.”

“That’s good. Go get your results and go from there.”

“Henry. We’re close. You just looked at my cock. Are you sure there’s nothing you’re hiding in your life? I promise I can keep a secret.”

“You want to know my secret, Rome?”

“Yes,” I said.

“I just stole three beers from Coach Denny. Going to pick up a pizza on the way home. Going to sit on the couch and eat the entire pizza, drink the three beers, and watch something scary.”

“Your social life is the scariest thing ever. Go get laid.”

“Go get your sperm checked.”

I had no comeback.

I looked down at my cock again.

Henry laughed and walked away, whistling.

I grabbed my cock and nodded.

No matter what the doctor says, I know you'll always get hard and take care of business.



THE ROOM SMELLED TOO CLEAN.

A neatly organized library was on each side of the wall.

Big windows showed the ocean.

And a guy named Dr. Louin sat behind a desk.

He was tall, built, wore thick black glasses and he smiled.

I pointed at him. “Hockey fan?”

“I like golf.”

“Kind of boring, no?”

“Don’t insult him,” Emily said.

“I’m not. We’re just talking. Even still, it’s not like he controls my cum. He can’t wave a wand and do something.”

“Do you have to use that word here?” Emily whispered.

“Oh, I’m sorry. *Semen*.”

“Speaking of semen,” Dr. Louin said. He picked up a folder. “Shall we?”

“I’m sure you have a round of golf to play,” I said.

“Yes, I do. Playing with Dr. Sach.”

“What’s his name? *Sack*? He should be the guy talking about semen then.”

Dr. Louin laughed. “Dr. Sach, he does plastic surgery.”

“What does this have to do with Rome’s cum?” Emily cried out.

She then gasped and jumped up, covering her mouth.

“WHOA, EM,” I said. “Such vulgar language.”

“I am so sorry about that,” she said. “I just blurted that out...”

“I’ve heard much worse from both men and women,” Dr. Louin said. “I can have someone else give you the medical stuff if you want, but I’ll keep it simple. Easy. Rome, you have plenty of swimmers. They’re active. They’re strong. They are... ready to go.”

I smiled ear to ear. “Yeah? Do I have a lot? Like more than normal? I’m talking... you know... like I have the power to repopulate the world if there was a zombie apocalypse.”

“I’m really not sure how to respond to that,” Dr. Louin said.

“Forget it,” I said. “But the point is... I’m good?”

“You’re good. Nothing wrong at all. No problems. So what we can do next then is to-”

“Nothing to do next!” I called out. “I’m ready to go!”

I grabbed between my legs and cheered.

I then offered that same hand to Dr. Louin for a handshake.

He didn’t accept the handshake though.

I couldn’t blame him for that.

As I turned, smiling ear to ear, I caught a glimpse of Emily running out of the office.

I chased after her.

She didn’t just run out of Dr. Louin’s office.

She ran out of the building.

Then she went in a different direction from my car.

She's really trying to get away from me!

“Em!” I called out. “Wait up, Em!”

She turned the corner of the building.

I ran even faster.

When I turned the corner, I almost crashed into her.

I found her leaning against the building, head down, hands at her face.

I stopped and gently touched her wrists.

She looked at me.

Tears running down her cheeks.

Blinking fast.

Her lips shaking.

“Em,” I said. “Em... what is it...?”

Her teeth chattered.

“Did you hear him? What he said? He said I’m good. He said my *semen* is perfect. That’s huge. That’s great news. Right? So what’s wrong?”

Emily freed her wrists and slammed her hands to my chest.

Out of nowhere she had some kind of superhuman strength.

She drove me back.

“You don’t get it?”

“What?”

“You selfish fucker!” Emily screamed.

“Selfish? I’m selfish? About what?”

“Oh, yeah, great. Good for you. Your sperm is just fine. I’m happy for you, Rome. You know what? This is good. Go spray your fertile juice all over the world. I can’t believe you right now.”

“What did I do?”

“Rome. I can’t get pregnant. And your sperm is just fine. Your sperm is so strong.”

“Yes. I know that.”

“So...”

“So? You’re asking me so? Rome!”

“What?” I growled.

Emily wound up and slapped me across the face harder than anyone had ever slapped me in my life.

I actually saw stars for a few seconds.

“It’s about me!” Emily yelled. “It’s about my body. I’m the one who can’t get pregnant. It has nothing to do with you. I’m the one who wants to have a baby. And if you’re good to go and I still can’t get pregnant...”

“Oh, shit, Em,” I said.

I felt three inches tall.

I had pulled a typical Rome move by being a complete selfish dick.

It was something I was used to though.

It never bothered me before.

I never had to worry about anything before.

If one woman called me a douche and took off, there were three others to take her place.

But with Emily...

“I’m going to call Ellie to come get me. I’m going to go for a walk. And you’re not going to follow.”

“Em.”

I reached for her and she punched my hand away.

She was ready to attack.

I backed off and gave her some space.

I watched her call Ellie for a ride.

On top of feeling three inches tall, my heart hurt and my stomach felt sick.

Calling myself out for being selfish was one thing.

But realizing I was fucking madly in love with Emily was a whole other

thing.

Chapter Thirty

EMILY



ELLIE PRESSED the button on the lighter and a flame jumped up.

She rested the flame under the skinny stick of incense and waited for it to catch.

She then gently blew out the flame, leaving smoke rising, which came with a pungent odor that went right up my nose and made my eyes water.

“Just relax,” she whispered. “Just let everything relax.”

“This is going to trigger an allergy attack in me,” I said.

“No, it won’t. This is right where you’re meant to be. Right here. Right with me.”

Ellie sat down on a pillow.

I was across from her, a small table between us.

I sat on a thick cushion with a bizarre pattern that hurt your eyes if you stared too long.

“We’re going to work on some breathing,” Ellie said. “Just for a minute or so. Calm it all down. Release what we can. Talk about the rest.”

“He celebrated his active sperm,” I blurted out. “So, what? I just have to

sit here with a failed reproductive system? That's how this works now? He gets to run off and know that if and when he wants kids, he's good to go? He just needs to find someone with a uterus and tubes and eggs and all that? What am I? Damaged goods now?"

Ellie tilted her head.

She was annoyed with me.

To my left was a glass of water.

I felt my nostrils flaring.

Yeah? You want to see how annoyed I am, Ellie?

I grabbed the incense stick and plopped it into my glass of water.

That got rid of the smoke and eventually would get rid of the smell.

I stood up and walked from the living room to the kitchen.

I considered getting a drink but instead I just stood there, arms crossed, pouting like a child who didn't get their dream Christmas present from Santa.

I knew Ellie was behind me.

She didn't say a word.

I didn't bother talking either.

It must have been a good three minutes, maybe longer.

"You're meditating, aren't you?" I asked.

"I'm harnessing."

"Harnessing what?"

"Anything I can grab at."

"Can we just be real and honest for a bit? Before we go off the deep end?"

"Emily, that's not fair to say to me," Ellie whispered.

I turned. "Not fair to you? You want to talk about not fair?"

My chin quivered.

Ellie walked toward me, arms open.

Sometimes all you needed was just a hug from your best friend.



I CRIED.

Ellie cried.

That made me cry harder.

That made her cry harder.

We were a mess of blubbering snot and words.

When I saw Ellie open the cabinet above the fridge and pull out a bottle of vodka, I was the one shaking my head.

“Oh, yes,” Ellie said. “If I’m going to do this, so are you.”

She twisted off the cap and skipped the idea of getting a glass or two, or mixing the alcohol with anything to dull the taste.

Her lips moved around the top of the bottle and back went her head.

After a quick drink, it was apparently my turn.

I held the bottle in my hand.

I sighed.

“Vent,” Ellie said. “Get it all out. We’re in the clutches of a female hell that no guy could ever understand.”

“Yes, we are.”

“Our bodies. Our minds. Everything we feel. Everything we experience.”

“Ellie, are you okay?” I asked.

“I’m great,” she said. She grabbed the bottle of vodka from me. “I’m vining off your energy. And you are pissed. You’re hurt. You’re angry. You’re in love with this man!”

I gasped. “I never said that!”

Ellie let out a weird laugh that almost sounded like a witch.

That cackling sound vibrated through all of Ellie’s stinky apartment as she walked away.

My best friend had the booze which meant I followed her.

Ellie plopped back down on her thick pillow.

“What are these pillows really for?” I asked.

“You put them between your legs or you put them at your lower back during sex for a better angle,” Ellie replied.

“What? You made me sit on a sex pillow!”

Ellie laughed again. “No. These are meditation pillows. Now sit down and talk. We’re getting it all out. Attacking everyone.”

“I feel like there’s someone you want to attack. Did you go on a date, Ellie? Did something happen?”

“I’m mad at your husband.”

“Did he do something to you?”

“Yeah. He did. He fucked with my best friend’s heart!”

“Oh, Ellie,” I said.

“Don’t you dare try to discount it...”

Ellie narrowed her eyes.

She looked like a witch now.

I had too much running through my head.

Now I was picturing Ellie spinning in a circle and suddenly appearing wearing a long black cloak and a pointed hat, grabbing for a broom to fly through the window and outside into the night, to go find Rome and torture him.

“He celebrated himself. In the wrong way. He didn’t mean harm. I’m mad at myself. At my body. That I have something wrong.”

“You just gave him credit.”

“I’m giving him space and energy!” I yelled.

Ellie rolled her eyes.

She drank more vodka.

“I think I broke you with my life’s drama,” I said.

“No. Not at all. I feel like I’ve failed you. As a friend.”

Ellie reached her hand out, passing me the bottle.

I sipped the vodka.

Ellie stared at me.

“How did you fail me?” I whispered.

My best friend looked ready to cry.

I had to do something.

She took everything personally.

She knew it was her fault that I showed up to Rome’s place.

And I guess in a way everything that happened after that...

I reached under the table and grabbed a stick of incense.

I set it up into the holder - *which was a statue of two naked mermaids with very nice breasts touching their nipples together, both looking up, where there was a small hole or slit for the incense stick to rest.*

I lit the incense and gave it a few seconds to burn.

The smoke teased my nose and made my eyes want to water.

I blinked fast.

“We should take a deep breath,” I said. “We should figure this out. Together.”

“No,” Ellie said. “This is about you. Your body. Your marriage. Your uterus. Your eggs. Oh, your precious eggs.”

Ellie then made an odd movement and began to crawl toward me.

She placed her right hand to my stomach.

I froze in place.

The vodka definitely hit her really hard and really fast.

She was drunk. Already.

Ellie rubbed my stomach. “Oh, you sweet, little eggs. What are you doing in there? Why won’t you accept Rome’s sperm? Huh?”

“Maybe because it’s Rome,” I said.

Ellie lifted her gaze and smiled big. “I think that’s it. Your body knows. Emily!”

“Oh, wow, Ellie. Stop this.” I touched her face. “Just stop this. I couldn’t get pregnant before Rome. Okay?”

“Maybe your body wants the real thing.”

“I’m going to pretend you didn’t say that. That wasn’t a good thing to say.”

“I’m falling apart right now in front of you.”

“You kind of are, Ellie.”

“I lost my job, Emily. And I want to start my own business. And I’m really scared to do it. And I’m really scared to talk about it. And I feel if I do talk about it... it’s not fair to you. You have so much going on right now. And I feel like I’m going to come across as though I’m stealing your moment.”

“Whoa. Wait a second. You got fired?”

“Yeah. Like a week ago.”

“You didn’t tell me?”

“You were in *Semenville*. Which is fine.”

I laughed. “Ellie. You’re so weird.”

“I know.”

“And listen to me carefully. Of anyone I know, you’re the one who should be doing their own thing. Having their own business. Have you even met yourself before? You’re insanely awesome. You chase your dream and follow your passion and you’ll be fine. There is nothing to worry about.”

“Look at you. Motivating me.”

“Just using your tricks.” I winked.

Ellie laughed. She sat back on her butt and blinked a few times. “I think I actually am drunk.”

“Oh, you are definitely drunk.”

She playfully kicked her left foot against my leg. “I’m really sorry about things, Emily. I know how bad you want to have a baby. I know you were excited about Rome. I mean, you two making a baby? That would be the most gorgeous baby in the world. I’m sorry it’s not working out at the moment. And I say that and I mean it. *At the moment.*”

“Yeah, well, *at the moment* has me wondering what do I do now for myself? Do I undergo some tests and all that, then wait for some truths I might not want?”

“Being a woman sucks.”

“Tell me about it.”

“But at least we have the goods.”

Ellie giggled and grabbed her boobs and then pointed between her legs.

“Okay, best friend. You are drunk. I’m going to drag your ass to your bed.”

“I can’t believe how hard that hit me.”

“You don’t drink, Ellie. Not like that. And you really took a big gulp. More than once. What did you think would happen?”

“I don’t know.”

“Your life is a mess all the time, right?” I whispered. “Your energy talks and crystals and incense and all that... it’s all wonderful. But you know, deep down inside life is just one big mess.”

“But it’s supposed to be a beautiful mess,” Ellie said. “Like for how messy this all is with you and Rome, you need to tell me that something is there. That you’re having fun with him. That you’re falling for him. Please tell me you love him!”

“That’s what you want to hear? I married the guy the night I met him, trying to be fun and spontaneous. I haven’t talked to him in a long time. Then I show up to get a divorce, confess I want a baby, and then end up having amazing sex with him, hoping he gets me pregnant. And you think in the midst of all of that, I actually fell in love with him?”

Ellie nodded.

I took a deep breath. I nodded too. “Well, you’re right.”

“You love him?”

“I love him.”

“You love your husband.”

“I love my husband.”

“That makes me so happy...”

“I bet I can make you even happier,” I whispered.

“How so?” Ellie asked with a drunken smile.

“What if I tell you what happened that night...”

“*The Vegas story?*” Ellie asked.

I nodded. “*The Vegas story.*”

The super secret story of how I ended up married to a sexy yet asshole hockey player...

Chapter Thirty-One

(THE VEGAS STORY)

ROME



“SO HERE’S where I’m at,” I say as I lift the shot glass of whiskey from the sticky bar. “There’s like ten seconds left in the game. I know we’re not going into overtime. Fuck that. I wanted to get here. To be with my beautiful girl.”

I wink at the beautiful girl.

It would be really nice right now if I could remember her name.

Christ, I flew her all the way from Phoenix to be here.

In glorious Las Vegas.

She’s got amber eyes and blonde hair with a reddish tint to it.

She’s wearing a *SOLA Empire* shirt with my name on the back.

The shirt doesn’t reach the top of her cut-off jean shorts.

There’s skin. Everywhere.

I can’t wait to take her, taste her, tease her... and... you know... fuck her.

That’s the whole point of this dance.

The back and forth.

“Clock is winding down,” I continue. “I can’t take it anymore. So I put the game on my back. My entire team on my back. Sebastian offers me this

weak pass but I manage. I see Tully flying at me. He's their big defenseman. Guy is eight feet tall. Massive. I take a hit from him. Doesn't bother me for a second. I've got my sights on one thing. Have to score that goal. So I could get to this one..."

I grab for the beautiful girl and pull her close.

She smells like slutty honey.

Believe me, if you know that smell, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

The smell runs through my body like an expensive drug.

Hitting all the right spots, just like I plan on doing to her with my tongue.

Soon.

She kisses my cheek.

I'm still holding my shot glass in the air.

This fucking story feels like a novel now.

"I gotta stop rambling," I announce. "So here's what I do. I get on net and I take a perfect shot. I flip the puck and... boom. Goal. We win."

Before I can bring the shot glass to my mouth, a hand grabs the glass out of my hand.

I turn and see Jago smiling.

He takes my shot of whiskey, flips the glass over and slams it down to the bar.

"How bout we tell the truth now?" Jago asks. "I saved the game. Not him."

"That's a lie."

"Who saved the last shot?" Jago asks.

"Who scored the game winner?" I ask.

"You're acting like there was no time left."

"There wasn't."

"Four seconds is a long time," Jago says.

"Maybe for you," I say.

I wink at the beautiful girl.

That gets a few chuckles from everyone.

“Finish the truth,” Jago says.

I lean toward him. “What are you doing to me here, man?”

“Look, I’m trying to get laid too,” Jago growls. “Don’t cut my fucking legs off. You already have someone to fuck.”

“Oh, I’m your wingman now?” I ask.

“Maybe a little. Would that be the worst?”

I shake my head. “Okay, here. Let’s massage Jago’s stale ego. The poor guy. So, yes, after I scored that amazing goal that won the game for us, there were a handful of seconds left. And, yes, guess what? There was one last shot on goal and Jago saved it. Let’s all clap for Jago, okay?”

I get the entire bar to clap for Jago.

He’s pissed at me for that move.

I don’t care.

He’s walking into my little bubble of lust and wants to mess around?

Jago pats me on the back. “Thanks, bro. I needed that.”

“Go find your own crowd.”

“Oh, too good for me?”

I look at Jago. “Listen, man. We’re in Vegas right now. We’re supposed to be flying back tonight. Remember?”

“I know. We’re taking a morning flight instead.”

“I’ve gotta make every second count.”

“With the chick from Arizona?”

“She’s amazing.”

I nudge Jago away and turn to look at the beautiful girl.

AKA - the chick from Arizona.

I really wish I knew her name right about now.

Her lips are begging for a kiss.

Not that I need to know your name to kiss you.

I kind of want to guess her name.

Let's try it out...

Her eyes say Megan.

Her hair says Anna.

Her shirt says Kirsten.

Her hips say Julie.

Her tits say... Touch me! Play with us! Lick us!

I'm not good at this game.

Fuck.

I guess I'm not going to find out her name.

"Rome," Jago whispers next to me.

I look at him again. "What the fuck, man?"

"Fair game tonight?"

"Fair game..."

"Fair game. You know what I mean?"

"Oh. Yeah. Of course. We're in Vegas. Fair game. Have at it."

Fair game is when Jago and I agree there are no 'dibs' on anyone.

I have my beautiful girl anyway.

I'm not worried about Jago or anyone else.

My biggest worry?

Do I find out this woman's name before or after she's screaming my name while my tongue wraps around her clit like an anaconda to a helpless animal?



I TURN my back for a second and I lose her!

All I did was order two shots of whiskey, a beer, and talk to three other women.

Sexy women.

Drunk and flirty, all wanting to touch and squeeze my biceps.
The typical flirty girl stuff I see in bars all the time.
I was expecting at least one of them to want to hang off my arm as I did
curls just to show off my strength.
That didn't happen.
They were fine flirting and giggling.
Somehow in there I lost sight of my beautiful girl.
I figure she just wandered off.
Maybe to use the bathroom.
Or have a cigarette.
Now I'm walking through a Vegas bar with people looking at me, trying
to talk to me.
Some guy shoves a napkin in my face and demands an autograph.
Another tells me to go the fuck back home where I belong.
Suddenly it feels like all the beautiful women are gone and it's just a
bunch of loser dudes getting drunk.
I sort of feel like screaming at them all that I'm fucking rich and I'll fuck
all their girlfriends, fiancées, and wives. Just for fun.
Instead, I just work my way toward the bathrooms.
That's where my beautiful girl is.
Hell, for all I know, she's *powdering her nose*.
I just hope it's nothing worse than that.
Now I'm thinking about what to do if I find her all worked up on drugs.
Take her to a hotel? Toss her ass on a plane back to Phoenix?
Panic tries to set in.
I kick open the women's bathroom and three women all look at me.
Lips pouty as they're reapplying lipstick.
I can't even yell out the beautiful girl's name because I don't know it!
I don't remember it!
I go to the men's room.

When I kick that door open I'm hit with a smell that's so toxic I'm sure it just took a year off my life.

No way she's in there.

I turn and walk down a narrow hallway.

Out of nowhere I hear a noise.

Kind of muffled. But not.

It's like a groan.

Then I hear a grunt.

A growling grunt.

Don't ask me how I know it, but I know that sound is Jago's sex voice.

Yes, Jago has a sex voice.

MY MIND SHIFTS GEARS.

I shouldn't bust in on Jago while he's trying to bust in on some woman.

But I can't help myself.

I follow the sounds and find a door halfway open.

"Dude, you gotta shut the door!" I call out as I step into a closet and flick on the lights.

I see Jago with his back against the wall.

Then I see a woman on her knees.

Her head moving back and forth.

She pulls back and her mouth makes a loud *pop* sound as she stops sucking Jago's cock.

She looks back at me and I let out a gasp.

It's my beautiful woman! She's giving Jago a blowjob!

"What the fuck?" I ask.

"You said fair game," Jago said. "Right?"

My mind scrambles.

I can't be hurt by this.

It's all for fun.

I'm not going to marry this woman. I'm not going to talk to her anymore after tonight.

But, damn, I feel a little sting in my chest for a second.

Here I thought Jago would find someone else.

But he set his sights on my beautiful girl.

She then licks her lips and smiles. "Come join. I can handle two at once. Wanna see?"

Now I would normally have my pants undone, down to my knees, my cock slapping back and forth like a happy elephant playing in a pool of water.

For some reason it just doesn't feel right tonight.

"Nah," I say. "You two enjoy."

"Rome," Jago says. "We good?"

"Perfect," I say.

I turn the lights off.

I listen to the beautiful woman slobber back onto Jago.

He grunts.

I pull the door shut.

I see an exit sign and for some reason I decide it's best to just bolt.

Not exactly end the night.

Just end it here.

Best part?

I'm bailing on my tab and when Jago is done filling my beautiful girl's stomach with himself, he'll take her back to the bar and he'll have to cover my tab.

I know that for sure because as I stand at the exit of the bar, I take out my phone and send Jago a text.

Enjoy your blowie. You can cover my tab too. Thanks, friend.

It's all for fun with Jago and I.

We always mess with each other.

I'll run up a tab and bolt.

He'll run up a tab and bolt.

Hell, just last month he ordered three escorts, then faked being sick when it came time to cover the costs.

It's what we do.

No hard feelings. Ever.

If he gets a blowjob from my beautiful girl and learns her name before she goes back to Phoenix, then good for him.

As for me, I'm bolting out of this bar and going to the next one.

That's the whole point of Vegas, right?

It feels endless.

There's trouble waiting just feet away.

There are women, booze, gambling, sex, and all of that twists itself into something that you can pretend to be fate.

I slip my phone into my back pocket and kick the door open to leave the back of the bar.

The door opens fast.

I hear a weird thud.

Then I hear a yell.

A scream.

I jump out into a well-lit back alley.

I look down and I see a woman sitting on her ass, covered in food and drink.

Holy shit, I just accidentally hit a woman with a door!

Chapter Thirty-Two

(THE VEGAS STORY)

EMILY



“YOU’RE NOT GOING?” I ask Ellie.

She holds up some jagged looking crystal that is purple, white, and lavender.

It’s a pretty stone.

“I can’t.”

“Why not?”

“I just... it’s what I feel.”

“Feel? It’s what you feel? You’re the one who said I needed this.”

Ellie looks at me. “You do need this. Alone.”

“So instead of going on a *best friend trip* to Las Vegas, I’m going alone? You picked the place.”

“The place picked me,” Ellie says.

I sigh.

I love her.

I really do love my best friend.

The crystals. The meditations. The incense. All the thoughts on

manifesting and energy.

I mean, honestly, if it wasn't for Ellie and who she was, I don't think I'd have the job I have now.

Struggling for so long to find the perfect teaching position and Ellie begged me to try it her way.

A month later, I had a job.

Ellie loved to move through life either super fast or super slow.

Hence the reason why one second we were about to leave for Las Vegas as two best friends going to have some fun...

We're going to see some male strippers for sure.

I want those big dongs so close to my face, I can feel a breeze!

And we're going to gamble, but not much.

We're going to drink drinks that have colors, not names.

We're going to have fun!

... and now I was going alone.

"I'll just cancel it all," I said.

"Don't do that," Ellie said. "You get the big hotel room to yourself. I paid for half the trip. I don't want a refund."

"I cannot let you shell out that kind of money and not go!"

"Too late," Ellie said.

She put down the crystal and grabbed my hand.

She looked at me and smiled.

The last time she acted this weird, I ended up with my dream.

So now I'm wondering... what's going to happen to me when I get to Las Vegas?



I CAN'T BELIEVE I'm flying on my own.

I'm actually on the airplane.

On my own.

And because Ellie isn't coming, I get to sit at the window seat *and* the middle seat is empty. Some guy in a suit takes the aisle seat and looks too serious to be bothered by anyone in life.

It's actually kind of perfect.

I pop in earbuds and take deep breaths to fight off the flight jitters.

It's not even that long of a flight.

Even still, I'm going to be thirty-thousand feet in the air in a metal tube.

Hey, don't they say that most car accidents happen really close to home? If that theory is true, doesn't it make sense to fly really far? But here I am on a short flight to Nevada. Why didn't I just drive? Oh my God, why? That could have been a killer road trip!

It's too late for any more changes now.

The door is shut.

Announcements are made.

The plane moves...

Taxi? Is that what they call it?

Or is it 'taxiing' ...?

I use my phone to figure it out.

Sure enough, it's called *taxiing*.

The word looks funny to me.

I focus on the word.

I focus on the calming playlist Ellie made for me for the flight.

Next thing I know I feel like I'm going faster.

And faster.

The rumble of the engines hit my ears.

The plane shakes a little.

There's pressure on my chest.

I fucking hate flying.

I hate it!

I no longer care about the word *taxiing*.

I glance out the window at the exact moment we leave the ground.

Holy shit. I'm in the air. I don't like this. I should have just stayed home. I hate this so much. This is terrible. Why am I doing this? I'm going to Las Vegas alone? What am I, some kind of idiot?

The entire process of getting up into the sky is terrible.

Ellie's stupid playlist does nothing.

My heart is racing.

I'm panicking.

I look to my left.

The guy in the suit is stone faced.

Oh, Mr. Tough Guy, huh? Fucking flying around all the time, huh? Good for you. You asshole. I hate you!

I shut my eyes.

I listen to music.

What I really need is a drink.

That's my focus now.

A drink.

Alcohol for the win!

Ellie would definitely advise against it, but she's not here.

Now that I have a goal in life, I don't worry so much about the plane still moving up into the air.

The ground is no longer visible.

No buildings.

Nothing.

We're now above the clouds.

Which means we have to be getting closer to drink time.

Right?

The guy in the suit reaches for his bag and takes out his laptop.

Just like that, he's at work.

We're allowed to take our seatbelts off now.
I say... *fuck that.*
That's like driving in a car and the faster you go, the safer it is?
Oh, look, you've reached three-hundred-miles-per-hour... take your seatbelt off!
I keep my seatbelt latched.
And I sit and wait.
As patiently as I can.
But what I really want to do... is stand up and scream for a drink.
Then I'd become the person who has an entire flight diverted back because I'm acting panicky and crazy.
I shut my eyes and take a deep breath.
I curse Ellie.
I curse myself.
I have no idea why I'm actually going to Las Vegas on my own.
But I'm going.
Maybe all the fate stuff and energy and crystals Ellie talks about... maybe it's about to pay off.
Maybe I'm going to hit it big and win ten million dollars or something.
Maybe I'll win a car and just drive back home.
I mean, hey, after all, I'm going to *f-ing* Las Vegas!
Anything can happen!



I GOT STUCK *on the plane for a full hour because of some airport issue.*
They stopped serving food and drinks way too early.
My slight buzz wore off too quickly.
Then... my bag... missing.
They lost my fucking bag!

I stand outside the airport waiting for a ride and I'm seriously considering taking up the habit of smoking.

I don't think it's a good habit at all.

I only ever tried a cigarette once in high school and it made me feel very sick.

But my stress level?

I feel like going back inside and getting a flight back home.

The good news is that my carry-on bag has all the essential stuff I need.

I should not have brought a second bag.

It's just a bunch of random clothes.

I mean, it's not like I'm staying here for a week.

Damn you, Ellie.

She's the one who said to pack a big bag.

That's what she was going to do.

We were going to get dressed up for different events.

Just for fun.

A dress for the casino. A dress for dinner. A dress for a show.

Some dresses were *moderate*. Others were low-cut and meant to show off a little.

That was the plan.

To just cut loose and have fun.

Damn. You. Ellie.

My car arrives and I get into the back seat.

I verify all the information with the driver and off I go to the hotel.

Now that part is a little bit fun.

I get to the hotel and it's big.

There's a casino in the hotel.

Duh.

I feel like royalty as I'm escorted to a room on the seventh floor.

The room is way too big for just me.

The first thing I do is rush to the large windows and look out to the city.
It's literally like you see on TV or read about.

The cliché notion of just bright lights, neon lights and blinking lights...
literally in the middle of a desert.

The fridge is full of alcohol.

I text Ellie a picture of myself having a drink.

So she knows I've arrived safely.

She texts me back...

HAVE FUN! BE SAFE! DON'T GET INTO TROUBLE!

I laugh.

I'm alone in a hotel room.

What kind of trouble can I really get into?



OKAY, a little bit of loneliness sets in.

The euphoric rush of it all starts to fade.

Now I'm alone at a bar, sipping a drink.

I just ate dinner alone.

I feel like everyone is staring at me.

Either wondering if I got stood up for a date or if I'm waiting for a date or
if I'm an escort or something.

I mean, I'm not dressed for the part though.

I'm in the same clothes as earlier.

Jeans and a t-shirt.

*Oh, baby. Look at me go. I'm a high class escort in my jeans I got on sale
and I used a coupon for even more savings!*

So, okay, let's be real.

Nobody is looking to hit on me.

And I'm not looking to be hit on.

I don't even know why I'm sitting at a bar.

Oh... wait...

I lost two hundred dollars in ten minutes at a casino.

The slot machines were one thing.

But then I decided to try the other games.

In a matter of minutes I'm yelling out colors, then yelling *hit me!* like I'm some kinky woman in bed with a hot guy.

And then - boom - money is gone.

That's how I ended up at the bar.

Which is right next to the casino.

And it's not some dirty bar.

It's all fancy.

A little while ago it was a little bit louder because there was a hockey game on.

The home team ended up losing at the last second so that pissed off a bunch of guys, who then took off with their drinks to gamble their troubles away.

I've literally spent my entire time so far in Las Vegas just randomly wandering around, no plans, not actually doing anything either.

Other than sucking at gambling...

I have a fleeting thought that has me getting on a plane and going home.

I mean, I came and saw and all that, right?

I really don't know what's next.

In reality I should just go back to my hotel room.

Enjoy the big room that I only have to pay half for.

Stare outside the window. Watch some TV.

Oh... take a really hot bath! And then a hot shower!

Wait. Emily. The shower... it's one of those fancy ones with multiple shower heads. Ones that you control. The wands. You know what that means, right? Imagine that hot stream of water between your legs...

It seems like a logical plan.

An orgasm and a good night of sleep.

I stand up from the bar and close out my tab.

The bartender - a cute guy dressed up like he's a bartender from Ireland - pours me another drink. And then he hands me my plate of leftovers.

It's a mix of appetizers.

Fries. Wings. That kind of thing.

Logically, why would I take that with me?

But then I picture it...

After the orgasm in the hotel room, I can take a hot bath and eat leftovers...

Kind of sounds like heaven.

The bartender puts his finger to his lips and smiles.

"Can I carry this around?" I ask.

"It's Vegas, darling," he says. "Where are you headed?"

I'm not about to tell a stranger where I'm staying.

So I make up a location.

The bartender then tells me where to walk, what door to use.

I'm dumb enough to listen.

Next thing I know, I'm behind the building and walking, trying not to get scared.

I mean, it's well lit and all, but I keep thinking of scary movies.

I keep picturing some kind of monster or bad guy jumping out from nowhere and attacking me.

I hear a noise and turn.

There's nobody behind me.

As I turn to face forward, suddenly there's a door in my way.

So fast that I walk into the door... or the door hits me...

I'm not exactly sure.

A second later I'm on my ass.

On the ground.

My drink poured all over me.

My food smashed all over me.

And - of course - out steps probably the hottest guy I've ever seen in my life.

Chapter Thirty-Three

(THE VEGAS STORY)

ROME



TO RECAP THE SITUATION...

Jago is getting a blowjob from the woman I flew in from Phoenix to hook up with.

And here I am, staring down at a woman covered in alcohol, food, and wing sauce.

She's scared and in shock.

Her eyes are as wide as the windows of my hotel room.

Truthfully, I can just walk away.

Even if this woman knows me, I don't know her.

No big deal.

She's the one walking near a door that could open at any second.

This is not my problem at all.

I find myself not moving though.

I'm standing there.

Staring at her. Still.

Of course she's still staring at me too.

I probably look like a monster to her.

A very handsome monster at that.

I let out a breath, step closer to her and crouch down.

“Are you with me?” I ask her.

I see her lips begin to move but nothing comes out of her mouth.

Ah, shit.

She hit her head on the door.

She’s concussed.

I’m going to spend my entire fucking night in a hospital with some stranger.

“Hey,” I say. “How about that door, huh?”

“Yeah,” she says. “Who put that there?”

She lets out a nervous laugh.

I reach toward her face.

Her cheeks slowly become as red as ketchup.

I swiped my pointer finger against her cheek, scooping up some of the sauce.

“Don’t mind if I do,” I say.

I stick my finger into my mouth and smack my lips together a few times.

A sweet, tangy barbecue flavor hits my tongue and throat.

“Okay, that’s good,” I say. “Not a fan of the spicy stuff?”

She giggles.

Shakes her head.

Next, I reach for whatever is remaining on her body... food wise.

I toss everything to the street and figure some animals will get it.

They’ll have a sweet and tangy snack later.

“How about we both stand up and try this whole introduction thing again?” I offer.

I can’t put my finger on it, but this woman is adorable as hell.

There’s this sweet innocence to her eyes. Her face.

The little curl on the right side of her lip as she smirks.
Her hair isn't messy but it's not put together much either.
She's wearing jeans and a t-shirt.
Just regular clothes.

Her bra is one of those good ones that hug the chest tight, not giving much away at all. Yet somehow I instinctively know there's beautiful boobs waiting under all those clothes.

And quite honestly - of all the ways I had met a woman in my life... hitting one with a door by accident was a first for me.

I stand up and offer my hand.

"I'm gross," the woman says.

"Nah. Far from gross. I think you look beautiful right now. A damsel in distress."

Her face turns a shade of red I've never seen before.

Instantly I know a man has never spoken to her like I am.

Which makes no sense to me.

A woman this pretty?

She has to get hit on all the time.

She has to hear the dumbest pickup lines ever.

Gently, she takes my hand.

I pull her up to her feet.

She is inches away from me.

All I can smell is the barbecue sauce.

"You were taking food back to your hotel, huh?" I ask.

She nods.

"To your husband?"

She shakes her head.

"Fiancé?"

Again, shakes her head.

"Boyfriend?"

She shakes her head one more time.

“Male escort?”

“No!” she cries out with a laugh.

“Oh, okay. Right. Your wife? Girlfriend?”

“No. I’m alone.” She cringes. “That sounded pathetic.”

“Very,” I say.

“Seriously?”

She playfully hits me in the chest.

Then she jumps back.

“Sorry,” she says. “I had a little bit to drink. I just...”

“You’re in Vegas alone?”

“So what if I am?”

“Someone stiffed you, huh?”

“Just needed time alone.”

“In Vegas.”

“You’re alone.”

“My buddy is getting a blowjob in a closet right now,” I say. “He’s probably done by now.”

She gasps. “Oh...”

“Hey, I’d rather hang out with you. I feel terrible. I ruined your dinner. And your drink. You know I have to fix all of this, right?”

“What do you mean?”

“I have to get you something to eat and drink.”

“What about my clothes?”

Oh, she’s playful...

She has no idea who she’s dealing with.

A second later, I grab her hand and start to move fast.

“Hey! Wait! I’m not just going to go with you! This isn’t some stupid romcom movie! This is real life, buddy!”

I stop. “My name is Rome. I play hockey. I bet if you think long enough

about it, you'll recognize me. What's your name?"

"Emily."

"Em," I say. "I'm going to call you Em. We know each other's names now. Anything else? My blood type? Social security number?"

"Hockey player..."

She sounds mesmerized.

"That's right. I scored the game-winning goal tonight. And now I'm running down an alley with you. Life is weird like that. I'm also rich. Not that it should matter. But if it does, so be it. I'm going to buy you some new clothes. And a drink. And something to eat. You're in Vegas alone. Maybe you should let me be your tour guide. Or bodyguard."

"Do you know how crazy that sounds?"

"Yes, I do. I could go right back into that bar and find someone else. Someone who knows who I am and is ready to spread their legs. But here I am with you."

Emily lets out a laugh. "First off, no matter what you think you can do or how charming you can be, my legs are not going to be spreading tonight. Got that?"

"Got it."

"And you still want to hang out with me?"

"Yup. I have no idea why. But I do."

It's as if her eyes are some kind of drug.

I'm hypnotized.

All the women I can have for the night are all around me.

And I'm locked in on someone who swears she won't sleep with me tonight.

I believe her.

And I still want to hang out with her.



WE GO into the first store we find.

They're everywhere.

I grab a hoodie and show it to Emily.

HORNY 4 VEGAS

"You have to get this," I say.

She gasps.

She blushes again.

I put the hoodie back and move closer to her.

"Are you going to tell me what you're really doing here?" I ask.

"That's none of your business. You're still a stranger to me."

"But I can buy you clothes?"

"You ruined my clothes."

"Oh, Em, they smell so good though."

I inch closer to her and she steps away.

She turns and hurries to find a basic t-shirt and a black pair of pants.

I block her path to the register. "Come on. Live a little. Pick something silly."

"You first," she says.

I look around.

I spot a cowboy hat with fake diamonds on the brim.

It's got a large V in the middle.

A second later the hat is on my head.

"You look like an idiot, Rome," she says.

"That's the point," I whisper. "So how about that hoodie?"

"Fine," she says. "You pay for it all."

"Correct."

"And then you're going to take me gambling."

"I am?"

"I lost a bunch of money gambling earlier."

"What makes you think I'm any good at gambling? I'd rather gamble on a

kiss from you, Em.”

She sucks in a breath. “You’re really good at this stuff.”

“I know I am. Careful, Em. You might blink and I’ll end up with your panties in my mouth.”

I make a biting sound with my teeth and Emily lets out a loud gasp.

I go and get the hoodie for her.

I overpay for every damn piece of clothing in the store.

Once we’re back outside, some asshole races by on a wide skateboard.

He lets out a growl and Emily jumps toward me and grabs my hand.

Just like that, Em and I are holding hands.

I don’t say a word.

Believe me, this is crazy to me too.

“I do owe you a drink and something to eat,” I say.

“I’m not hungry. But I can use that drink.”

I pull at her hand and we go into a random casino.

I offer to buy her a fruity blue drink and she turns it down.

She wants a beer. And whiskey.

Then I take her to a blackjack table.

I have one hundred dollars to spend.

I lose three hands in a row and I have forty bucks left.

I bet the rest on sixteen and I take the risk and say *hit*.

The dealer offers up a five and just like that, I win and I look cool in front of Emily.

I give her all the chips.

She tries to refuse.

I don’t want them.

We get another round of drinks and walk outside again.

“My friend bailed,” she says out of nowhere. “We were planning this girl’s thing. She felt she couldn’t come. This is really unlike me to do this kind of thing. Part of me wants to be a little crazy. Part of me just wants to go

to bed and fly home tomorrow.”

“Well, you’re with me right now. And I swear to you, you’re safe. You tell me what you want to do and I’ll make it happen.”

“Okay. Like I believe that. That sounds like a tactic...”

I hurry to block her path. “Hey. You said *no*. I respect that. If you change your mind, that’s one thing. But you’re also drinking. And I would never put you in harm’s way. I mean that.”

“Well, you’re just the biggest surprise of the night,” Emily says.

“I’m a surprise to myself too,” I confess. There’s a pause between us. “So... what’s next? Still got some crazy in you?”

“Possibly,” she says.

I look around. “Well. We can sneak into a show, get caught and kicked out. We can go get matching tattoos. Or just tattoos.”

“I don’t trust you picking out my tattoo,” Emily says with a sexy smile.

I look around some more.

Emily does too.

Then comes an odd moment.

We both look at the same place at the same time.

We both look at one of those wedding chapels.

Then we both look at each other again.

We both start to laugh.

Now that would be one hell of a crazy story to tell...

Chapter Thirty-Four

(THE VEGAS STORY)

EMILY



I WAKE up in the big, comfy hotel room bed all by myself.
For some reason I check the bed to make sure I'm alone.
Believe me, I am not the type who brings a man home for one night.
My idea of a hookup is plugging the HDMI cable into the back of my TV.
Laughable and sad, but that's just how I do things in life.
I roll to my left and pull the covers up to my chin.
My muscles are aching to stretch.
I have a very faint headache.
A far cry from what I expected.
On the nightstand I see a glass of water, half empty.
A small packet ripped open.
For a second I think it's a condom wrapper.
My heart jumps into my throat and I quickly grab between my legs with
my right hand.
I have no idea what I'm looking for down there.
There's not a sticky note that says *EMILY HAD SEX LAST NIGHT!* for

me to find.

I reach for the wrapper, my mouth bone dry, and I realize it's just an ibuprofen wrapper.

One of those little ones they give out or you can buy.

Just two pills inside.

I glance at the water again.

I don't remember taking medicine last night.

In fact...

I sit up in bed and look around.

I stare across the bedroom.

My heart's racing faster by the second.

I'm begging to enter a state of denial and just live there for the rest of my life.

Because...

I know what I'm going to find if I look at my left hand

I know the truth.

I know that I got married to a hockey player last night.



I KICK the covers off the bed and I jump out.

My feet land on the floor.

For some reason I lunge at the windows to open the curtains.

As though I think I'm in another city or country.

I'm not.

It's still Las Vegas.

Just in the morning now.

Where some of the debauchery sleeps while the rest gets in line for a killer breakfast buffet.

I spot my phone on the other nightstand.

I pick it up and see a collection of texts from Ellie.

Everything ranging from **WHAT THE FUCK DID YOU DO** to **OMG YOU REALLY GOT MARRIED? ARE YOU CRAZY?**

Then a bunch of texts of her just sending my name over and over.

First things first, I need to message her back right now.

Ellie. Hey. Morning. Ugh. Sorry about last night. I got a little crazy. Yay for Las Vegas! Lol. We'll talk soon. I need to find something to eat and some coffee. Yeah, yeah, I know, I'm hungover.

I toss my phone to the bed and exit the bedroom.

The rest of the hotel room is empty.

Or so I think.

A second into what's disguised as peaceful silence, the other bedroom door opens and out steps a shirtless hockey player.

"Rome," I call out.

"Em," he calls back.

Okay, the whole calling me Em thing rushes back to me. And even sober, hearing him call me Em makes my inner thighs tremble. Fuck.

I hold up my left hand. "What the fuck?"

Rome holds up his left hand.

He has a ring on his finger too!

"We got married last night," he says so calmly.

"Yeah. No shit. Seriously. What the fuck?"

"It was your idea," he says. "Coffee?"

"It was not my idea. And yes, I want coffee."

Rome struts through the hotel room, using his phone to order coffee and hopefully some food.

Not a care in the world.

Which shows me just how much he values something like marriage.

The fact that he's shirtless makes this whole thing even crazier.

A part of my brain refuses to do some looking.

But I have this little collection of horny brain cells who are squawking at me, acting stupid, demanding I lick his broad chest and lick each section of his ab muscles.

I'm not licking anything.

No way.

Other than my lips because they're dry.

My nerves are shaking.

Rome must see that in me because he walks toward me.

Shirtless.

He touches my arms.

Shirtless.

He smiles at me.

Shirtless.

"Em, it was a fun night," he says. "You and I spotted the chapel. You're the one who made a comment about getting really crazy. You didn't want to get a tattoo but you wanted a memory."

"Fuck," I whisper.

He's right.

It all comes flooding back to me...

I step away from Rome and turn.

He's still right behind me. "It's not that big of a deal."

I spin around. "What?"

"We got married."

"We got married!" I yell at him.

"So what? We were having some fun."

I open my mouth...

My mind decides right then to open the floodgates to the memories of last night.

The woman behind the counter is tall with red hair that matches her red lipstick.

“How long have you two been in love?”

“Ten minutes,” Rome announces.

“Maybe less,” I say. “I’m still mad at him. He hit me with a door!”

“I had to get her attention,” Rome says.

He grabs me by the hips and pulls me against him.

His body is so hard.

So. Fucking. Hard.

We’re giggling and laughing and I know I’m a little bit drunk but not too drunk.

I mean, I know what I’m doing right now.

I’m flipping through some pages to pick out what kind of wedding design I want.

“Just give us the first opening you’ve got,” Rome says. “I want to marry this woman right now. No matter what it costs!”

The woman smiles.

Money.

The motivator.

She closes the book and puts her hands together.

“My Uncle Jerry will marry you right now,” she says.

Now Uncle Jerry?

That guy...

He’s got slicked-back black hair and huge sunglasses on his face.

His jaw is a little crooked and he’s attempted to grow in a beard but it looks like someone glued patches of pubic hair randomly across his chin.

He’s in a white suit with little blue flowers sewn onto the shoulders.

He loves to point at you with his fingers as a gun and he loves to click his tongue.

Yes, he’s the most perfect person to have marry you when you’re in Last Vegas and drunk, hanging out with a hockey player you just met hours earlier.

When it comes time to sign paperwork - the official paperwork that means we will be actually married...

Rome signs with a big smile on his face.

The guy is a millionaire hockey player and he's just signing...

For all he knows I could flip a switch and turn into some psycho woman, hire a lawyer and come after half his stuff.

Rome is such a badass. But he's kind of dumb too.

And, oh my, he is so sexy.

I sign the papers as I stare at Rome.

I tell myself instead of getting married, why not just go back to my hotel room and explore Rome's body with my tongue? Why not let him explore mine?

Am I really secretly trying to portray this wholesome schoolteacher woman this much?

Oh, okay, instead of having a steamy one-night stand, I'll just marry the guy and not sleep with him!

"You didn't want to get any of the photo packages," Rome says, breaking up my thoughts.

"I remember," I snap. "I remember everything, Rome."

I storm away and go into the bathroom.

I stare at myself in the mirror.

I end up standing there until I hear the knock at the hotel room door for the room service Rome ordered.

Finding some pride in myself, I wash my hands and leave the bathroom.

Rome has a whole bunch of coffee and food on the large table near one of the large windows.

"This is a really nice room," he says. "Better than mine. You can't imagine the rooms they make us sleep in when we travel."

"What are we going to do here, Rome?" I ask.

"About?"

I point to my left hand.

He nods.

Then he takes his ring off.

“Give me yours, Em,” he says.

I slide the ring off my finger and toss it to him.

“Follow me,” he says.

He leads the way back into the bathroom I just walked out of.

“Listen, I’m not making fun of you here or anything,” he says. “I understand that this stuff means more to you than it appears to mean to me. We had a fun night. I think we did. I mean, I had some fun. I’ll be honest. I’ve never spent that much time with a woman who didn’t end up naked with my tongue between her legs.”

“What about getting married?” I ask.

“Never.”

“So I’m just... unique.”

“You’re special, Em,” he says with a grin. “Very special. But we don’t need this. Right? So...”

With the flick of his wrist, the rings end up in the toilet.

He tells me we need to do it together.

As if getting married to the guy wasn’t weird enough, now I’m flushing the wedding rings down the toilet with him.

Rome then looks at me. “So we just let it go. That okay with you?”

“Just... let it go?”

“It’s our story. Our secret. Whatever you want it to be.”

He touches my cheek.

Then my chin.

Rome inches down and brushes his lips to my cheek.

Horny butterflies race throughout my body all at once.

I really have no idea how to handle this going forward.

Legally, we are married.

Logically, I just want a cup of fucking coffee.

Chapter Thirty-Five

EMILY



... SO THAT WAS *the Vegas story...*

The classic tale of how I got hit with a door, spilled food and drink on myself, ended up with a hoodie declaring I was horny, and also ended up marrying a hockey player.

The aftermath?

Nothing really.

I didn't put much into the notion of actually being married to Rome.

There were occasions when it popped up here and there, but if he didn't say a word, neither did I.

Right up until...

"Then I showed up at his door to get a divorce," I said as Ellie's eyes looked heavy and drunk.

"Because of me," she said. "I did that."

"Yes. You did."

"Did I make magic happen?"

Ellie wiggled her fingers at me and laughed.

“I sent you there alone,” she said. “Both places! I sent you to Vegas alone! And then to his place. Alone!”

Her voice slurred a little.

She kept laughing.

“You can’t resist him,” Ellie said. “Next time, I’ll be with you. And we’ll get to the bottom of this. Okay?”

“Okay, Ellie,” I said. “Come on. Stand up. You need to go to bed.”

“Nope. No way. I’m going to meditate first. I’m going to harness all this energy and fix this. I’m going to get you a baby, Emily. You’re my best friend. I love you. I want you to have a baby. You know what, Emily? You know what? You can have all my eggs. I’m serious. Take them all!”

“That’s nice of you to say.”

“I mean it,” Ellie said. She grabbed my hands. “Let’s do it. Let’s go to a doctor and figure this out. Okay? I’ll give you my eggs. And then with Rome...” Ellie started to giggle. She put her head on my shoulder. “That’s weird. Are they going to use a turkey baster and squirt your husband’s semen up my cooter?”

“Please don’t ever call your vagina a *cooter* again,” I said.

Ellie laughed some more.

I got her into her bed.

She insisted on sitting up to meditate.

She shut her eyes, began to sway, and a few seconds later her chin dipped to her chest.

She started to snore.

I guided her down to her pillow and she was out cold for the night.

I wandered back out to the living room and sat on the couch.

On my phone I had a text waiting.

I begged myself not to look.

Somewhere in my gut I knew who it was and what it was.

But I looked anyway.

My husband wanted to check up on me.



I STOOD outside Ellie's apartment building, hugging myself.

There were four streetlights - one at each corner of the parking lot.

One was completely burned out.

Two others buzzed loudly.

The fourth one lighted normally.

I heard the sound of Rome's car before I saw it.

He pulled into the parking lot and made a wild turn and quickly backed into a spot.

This suddenly had an almost high school feel to it.

Me sneaking out of an apartment.

This bad boy in a bad boy car speeding around.

I hurried up to the passenger side of the car and climbed into it.

My heart raced.

My nerves felt pinched.

I had butterflies in my stomach.

I looked at Rome and it was like the floodgates of lust decided to open between my legs.

That whole jeans and a t-shirt vibe made it really difficult to look at him and not want to pounce.

"I'm here," I said. "You texted me. You had to see me. Right?"

"I've got hockey practice."

"Right now?"

Rome nodded. "We do things like this before camp and all that really gets going. It's like a dumb bonding thing. We meet up for midnight practice. Just the six of us. We run drills, plays, drink, talk, and usually end up crashing in the locker room to sleep the booze off. Not sure how it'll go this year with

everyone's lives so different and crazy.”

“Oh. Okay.”

I tightened my jaw.

As much as I wanted to know more, I really didn't.

Fuck you, Rome.

Fuck you for what you said and how you acted.

“How's Ellie?”

“Passed out. Drunk.”

“Whoa. The spiritual woman drinks booze?”

“She's having a tough minute. She lost her job. She wants to start her own business. Blah, blah...”

“And what about you?”

“What about me?”

“Any news on the promotion?”

I curled my lip. “Do you care, Rome? Or is this forced?”

“Forced? What's forced? I just drove twenty minutes out of the way to come see you.”

“Why? You think you're going to show up, be smooth and lure me into the back seat?”

“*Lure...* whoa. That's a risky word to use.”

“You know what I meant.”

“It's just a risky word. I didn't come here for that.”

“Then why are you here, Rome? I'm the idiot who gives you Ellie's address and I'm the idiot who climbs into the car.”

“I don't think you're an idiot at all, Em. I wanted to talk about what happened.”

“You being an asshole? Go for it. I'm all ears.”

Rome rubbed his chin. “This is all new for me. And really hectic.”

“I didn't ask for any of it.”

“I'm not saying you did. But you know there's things to do for you.

Right?”

“Things to do? What do you mean by that, Rome?”

He tightened his grip on the steering wheel.

I was getting under his skin a little.

I liked it.

I wanted to annoy the hell out of him.

He deserved it.

“Doctors, Em. There are other doctors to go to. To talk to. There are... *things*. I’m not bragging or trying to be a hero, but I’ve got the ability to...”

“What? Pay for it?”

“Yes. I’ve got the means.”

“So I’m just some broke teacher? Right? I can’t afford all the rich and fancy doctors like an athlete can, right?”

Rome sighed. His jaw tightened.

He was even sexier when he was pissed.

“I think you’re being unfair, Em.”

“I think you’re an asshole, Rome.”

“That’s good. Glad we cleared that up then. Tell you what. You let me know what you want to do next. Okay? So I don’t come across the wrong way. I don’t want to appear commanding or anything like that. I’m just letting you know if you need something I’m there to support you. There are options. There are doctors. And I don’t want you to worry about that. You said you wanted a baby. I said I would give you one. I’m going to stick to my word.”

“That’s nice of you, Rome.”

I opened the car door and Rome grabbed my wrist.

“Em,” he whispered.

I looked at him.

He tugged at my wrist.

I lost all sense of control as I lunged for him.

I ended up on my knees on the passenger seat. My feet sticking out the open car door.

My right hand on the dashboard.

My left hand on the console.

Rome touched my face.

We started to kiss.

Hard and fast.

Our lips barely touched for a second before we were in full make out mode.

His tongue. My tongue.

Our teeth accidentally touched for a split second.

It made every nerve in my body jump.

Warmth flooded my body.

My breasts were suddenly achy. My nipples suddenly tight.

My inner thighs shaking.

My clit pulsating, wishing Rome's tongue...

I broke away from the kiss and wiped my lips as though that negated the entire thing.

“You’re an asshole,” I growled. “What you did and what you said. Bragging about your cock. About your cum. In front of me like that? And you don’t even care, do you? Must be nice to be you, Rome. You know you’re just fine. How do you think that makes me feel?”

“Did I not just tell you I will support anything you want?”

“Fuck off, Rome.”

I climbed out of his car and walked back to Ellie’s apartment building.

I walked to Ellie’s door and went inside.

I walked to the window and saw Rome still parked in the same spot.

He didn’t peel out and storm off.

I swallowed hard.

After a minute or so, Rome pulled away.

He moved slow and normal.

I wasn't sure what that meant.

Maybe he didn't mean to sound like a jerk but flaunting money in front of my face did not help me at all.

Then again, how would Rome know that?

What did Rome actually know about me?

Sure, the Vegas story was wild and cute and maybe a little sexy.

It was fun to tell.

But now, having him crashing back into my life and wanting to give me a baby and wanting...

I didn't know what he wanted.

I didn't even know what I wanted anymore.

It felt like the perfect time to turn to Ellie but she was sound asleep in a vodka induced coma.

So I stood at the window and stared at the now empty parking spot where Rome had been.

Only one thing made perfect sense.

To go back to where it all began. Sort of.

To finish what I had originally set out to do.

It was so obvious.

I needed to get divorced from Rome.

Chapter Thirty-Six

ROME



I KNEW something was going to happen to me.

I balanced on my skates wearing a blindfold.

The blindfold was a towel from the locker room that had been washed several times but still had the faint odor of sweat.

It was close to two in the morning and we were all buzzed and just messing around on the ice.

The plan was to finish up soon, sleep in the locker room, grab some breakfast, have a morning skating practice, then talk to the media.

Our first chance to answer some questions and get a little buzz going for the season.

Now, as far as the blindfold thing went?

That was just part of the midnight skate fun.

It was my turn to get blindfolded and take a shot on goal.

It wasn't very easy being blindfolded and on ice skates.

Add that to needing to use a hockey stick and hit a hockey puck into the hockey net... *all the while a little drunk...*

“Come on, Rome,” Sebastian said. “We don’t have all night.”

“He’s thinking about his wife,” Joe said.

“You think she’s real?” Atlas asked. “Or does he have to inflate her?”

Now, it was all fun and games, especially when Atlas and Joe had a little bit to drink and turned their asshole meters down a few notches.

Even still, I didn’t want anyone disrespecting my wife.

I smiled. “You know, Atlas, I would never mess around with an inflatable doll. If I wanted something to fuck, I’d just call up Hazel. She already told me the truth. How the biggest parts of you are your muscles. Watermelon sized biceps and a lima bean sized dick.”

I let out an annoying laugh and started to skate.

Oh, I knew for sure Atlas would want to start something with me over that comment.

He’d have to puff out his chest and act tough.

I’d probably get a smack in the jaw.

A bloody lip.

Well worth it though to know I could easily get under his skin by offering to sleep with Hazel. And to make fun of his manhood.

I had the puck on my stick.

I found myself looking down and then forward, over and over, as though I did not have a blindfold on my face.

It was just instinct at that point.

I think somewhere there was some logic behind the blindfold thing.

Like in some way it made us focus on our skills.

It made us feel our skates, the ice, the stick, the puck. It made us find our location or something.

At some point, all that logic ended up traded for booze, laughter, and stupid stuff.

I mean, drunk and blindfolded?

One slip on the ice and someone’s season could be over before it started.

I had a small sense of where I was on the ice.
I brought my stick back to take the shot.
As soon as my stick hit the puck I felt a collision into my left shoulder.
I hit the ice ass first and heard Atlas chuckling.
“Dick move,” I called out.
“Don’t care,” he said.
“Holy shit,” Henry called out. “Rome. Your shot went in!”
I reached for the blindfold and pulled it off my face.
I was smiling, excited to see that I scored a goal while blindfolded.
Instead of seeing the net and the puck...
I saw Jago’s ass.
Literally.
His shorts down to his ankles.
Bent forward.
His hands grabbing at his ass cheeks.
Spread wide.
Skating backward toward my face.
“Hole in one!” Jago yelled.
“Wrong sport, idiot,” I said.
Of all the sights in the world... Jago’s sweaty, smelly ass... no thanks.
I swung my left foot, hitting his left foot.
Jago quickly lost his balance and toppled down to the ice.
He started to laugh.
I looked back at Henry.
He shrugged his shoulders. “Sorry. Had to play my part.”
I shook my head.
I looked toward the net.
Aside from Atlas hitting me and Jago trying to shove his gross ass in my
face...
That blindfolded shot I took?

It didn't go into the net.



I SLEPT in a sleeping bag on the floor of the locker room.

I tossed and turned because it was so damn uncomfortable but also because I missed my wife.

I wanted her with me. Or I wanted to be with her.

Her body against mine.

Me holding her.

The two of us suspended in that sweet and flirty moment waiting for someone to make a move.

Hint - it would be me.

I'd gently nudge my thick cock against her back.

Her body would stiffen and I'd feel her heart jump.

Then all I'd need to do was kiss her shoulder...

I told myself having those thoughts in a sleeping bag in a locker room full of guys...

I had no problem getting rock hard in front of my teammates.

I just didn't want any of them jealous when they saw the full effect of what I had to offer.

I had a kickstand to lean on.

So between the sexy thoughts of my pissed off wife and the uncomfortable sleeping bag and hard locker room floor and the booze swimming around my head, I did not sleep great at all.

Henry was awake and sitting in a chair, phone in his hand, coffee between his feet.

I sat up like a grumpy vampire and grunted at him.

He gave me a nod.

"Coffee?" I asked.

“More coming soon,” he said. “I’m putting an order together.”

“Do you always handle the food?”

“Always, brother,” Henry said.

I pulled at the sleeping bag, making the zipper scream as it opened with speed.

I slowly stood up.

My body felt achy, like I had been in a car accident.

I rubbed the back of my neck and stretched my back.

“Hey, Rome,” Henry said.

“Yeah?”

“You got a warning sign for that thing?”

Henry held his left hand out and looked to his right with a smile on his face.

I glanced down and saw that my morning wood was causing a disturbance.

Once again, if these guys had morning wood... it would be a nice maple tree. Or a solid and sturdy oak.

As for me?

I was a fucking redwood.

I put my hands to my hips. “What do you want me to do about it, Henry?”

“Stand somewhere else,” he said.

I put my pants on, grabbed a chair for myself and sat down.

My rock-hard morning cock did not feel comfortable at all tucked away inside my pants.

I needed Emily.

I needed my wife.

I needed her to feel what I had going on here and take *full control*.

Hand. Mouth.

“What are you in the mood for?” Henry asked.

“*Pussy*,” I said, finishing my thought.

Henry laughed. "I think we're all in the mood for that."

I cleared my throat. "Dude, just get food here. As soon as possible."

"On it," Henry said.

"Do you ever sleep?" I asked.

"Every once in a while. I have no desire for it."

"So what do you do?"

"Just think. Enjoy my life."

"You know, I'm not going to let it go. You have secrets. I can see it in your eyes. There's something that burns at you."

"Well, if you want to think of me as some kind of mystery, then go for it," Henry said. "But I think you have bigger things to worry about."

"Like my dick?" I asked and pointed down.

Henry shook his head. "We were *this close* to having a normal conversation, huh?"

"Can't get too serious around here," I said.

"Want to talk about your wife?"

"What about her?"

"Just... curious."

"Ah. Okay. You're thinking about my dick."

"What?" Henry asked.

I leaned toward him. "My dick is hard. And he's shooting full speed. Full strength. Get what I mean?"

"That's good," Henry said. "But that also means..."

I nodded. "Yeah."

"Poor woman," Henry said. "That's got to be so hard. Emotionally. You know? Wanting a baby and not being able to get pregnant. That adds a ton of stress to a woman's body and that makes it even harder to get pregnant."

Damn.

I'm an idiot.

I really am an asshole.

“You okay?” Henry asked. “Your eyes are blank.”

I swallowed hard.

I celebrated my dick in front of her.

I celebrated my sperm count.

I rubbed it in her face that I could get someone pregnant.

Just not her.

And it wasn't my fault...

Henry whistled. “Rome?”

I stood up.

Henry slinked back to not get smashed in the face by my morning wood.

I rubbed my jaw.

I was wrong.

I was so fucking wrong.

Before I could make any more sense of what was happening, what I felt, or what I should do, everyone started to wake up.

The food arrived a few minutes later.

The morning was in full swing.

I had to think about hockey now for a little bit.

I didn't want to think about hockey.

I didn't want to play hockey.

I didn't want to deal with reporters.

I just wanted my wife.



THE FOOD WAS GREAT.

The morning skate was shit.

I was tired and annoyed.

Coach Denny rode us hard.

I felt too winded.

It was one thing to be *in shape* in the gym.
It was a whole other thing to be *in shape* for the game itself.
Jago played out of his mind, giving up no goals.
Atlas was hitting as though it was a real game.
By the time we were done, I was full on pissed off.
I kept my distance from everyone, trying to prep for when the media showed up to ask questions.
We all had to play nice.
We all needed the soundbites.
Orders came down directly from Ellen herself.
She loved to create buzz for the team.
Believe me... the shit I've seen this woman do...
"Rome," a voice said next to me.
I turned my head. "Benny."
Benny smiled.
He had a round face that matched his round body.
Black glasses resting on his nose.
A guy who loved hockey more than life itself.
A guy who loved to find all the stories, drama and scoops.
"What do you want?" I asked, kind of playfully.
"You don't want to talk about the team, do you?"
"You're not going to get a story off that," I said with a laugh.
"I've got a better story," Benny said. He inched closer. "How long have you been secretly married?"
Benny grinned.
I curled my lip.
"I know everything, Rome," Benny said. "Now I need you to talk to me before I start assuming, writing and hitting submit..."
My heart sank as I began to wonder just how screwed I was at that moment.

Chapter Thirty-Seven

ROME



THE ONLY THING I could do was play into it a little.

Keep a smile on my face.

See if I could dance my way around Benny's bullshit, then find and talk to Emily so she and I could figure out what to do next together.

My only concern was her.

Her name, reputation, and her career.

As far as I went?

Everyone already knew me as the asshole bad boy of the team.

Me getting married? No shock.

Me secretly being married? No shock.

No sweat off my back at all.

For Emily?

"We should talk," Benny said.

"I should put your head through this locker," I said.

"You can do that, Rome. I can also write down that you threatened me. Doesn't paint you very well, does it?"

“What does anything with my personal life have to do with hockey?”

“It doesn’t,” Benny said. “But everyone loves a good story. A juicy secret story too.”

I saw myself grabbing Benny and knocking him out cold.

I’d take the heat.

I’d pay the fines.

I’d deal with the suspension.

Hell, I’d even deal with the police and the arrest and the trial and lawsuits and even go to jail.

If that meant shutting this little asshole up for good.

“Here’s the problem,” Benny said. “I know you want to clean my clock over what I’m saying. But I think you’re lucky it’s just me. For now.”

“What the fuck does that mean?”

“Rome, let’s talk somewhere more private. I’m trying to be on your side with this.”

I didn’t like the vibe but I gave Benny half an ounce of respect for wanting to talk privately.

The two of us walked out to the hallway and I led the way to one of the medical rooms.

Inside, I locked the door.

Benny leaned against the counter and I jumped up on the table.

Normally I’d be sitting there to get an injury looked at.

Hurt shoulder.

Fucked up finger.

Twisted ankle.

Missing tooth.

Cuts to the face.

A bloody nose or eye from a fight.

The only thing hurting now was my ego.

“I did not intend for this,” Benny said. “I want to talk about the season.

You've got to put yourself in my shoes."

"And what does that mean?"

"It means I've got the lead on a story. A really interesting story. Now, is this going to shake the world? Hell no. Will it do anything to the game? Nope. But it's a good story. I have the outspoken *bad boy* of the *SOLA Empire*... secretly married? For a while now? I have this guy who loves the game. He loves the life. He loves the money. He's known for partying and enjoy it all. It's well known you love women, Rome. And that's okay. But you're married. What does that imply?"

"I don't know, Benny. What does that imply?"

I felt my teeth starting to grind.

"Well, it could a few things, I guess. Does your wife know? Does she know you're out running around with women all the time? It seems she would since your reputation is out there. Or perhaps you have her shielded from it all. You have her convinced you're just playing a part. Right? You have a role in all of this. It's very interesting stuff, Rome. Of course, maybe your wife is into it. Maybe you both have that particular lifestyle. And there's nothing wrong with that at all. I'm not here to say what anyone should do with their life. In or out of the bedroom. Right?"

"Anything else you'd like to add, Benny?"

Benny shrugged his shoulders. "I'm just going by what she told me."

"What *she* told you...? Who is *she*?"

Benny lifted an eyebrow. "*Your wife told me everything.*"



I TOLD Benny do whatever the fuck he felt like doing.

I stormed out of the medical room and ran back to the locker room to get my phone and my keys.

I didn't even bother getting changed.

All I could see was red.

Pure, terrifying red.

It felt like a punch to the gut and screamed of betrayal.

Why?

I wasn't exactly sure.

Other than the fact that Emily wanted to get back at me for being excited about my own sperm count.

Okay, fine.

Henry was right about how it must have been really hard for Emily.

Was I selfish?

I don't fucking know.

I don't know anything other than being alone.

So my personal celebration means I'm selfish now?

I thought about texting Emily but I skipped that.

No. No texts.

I was going to do to her what she did to me.

Just show up and crash her life. Her night. Her everything.

Start demanding things.

Flip things over... not literally.

But, you know, like I said.

Her life.

When I arrived at her condo, I knocked on the door and didn't stop until she answered.

I wasn't in the mood for the *who is at my door* games.

As soon as Emily opened the door, I let myself inside.

I towered over her.

She stepped back, surprised to see me.

"Rome," she said. "What are you doing here? You smell like sweat and hockey."

"This is what you do to get back at me? You talk to someone?"

“What?”

“Don’t play cute with me, sweetheart,” I said. “You want me to apologize for my reaction to getting my sperm tested? Is that what this all is? Some big joke? You’re going to sabotage your entire career for what?”

“Whoa, Rome. Calm down. I have no idea what-”

“You’re going to add liar to your list too now? Cut me some slack, Em. I’ve never been in love before. I’ve never cared before. I really did want to give you a baby. But maybe it’s good you didn’t get pregnant.”

The slap she gave me maybe was warranted.

I wasn’t sure.

Emily gasped and her eyes filled with tears. “I have no idea what you’re talking about, Rome.”

“No? Then why did I get cornered by a reporter about us? Huh? A guy who not only says he knows everything about our marriage, but he talked to you about it.”

“What?”

“Really? You’re going to play the dumb card?”

“Wait a second. You really think I would do something like that?”

“What am I supposed to think?” I asked.

“Oh, Rome. You’re really acting like an asshole then.” Emily swallowed. “Wow. As if this week can’t get any more fucked up and painful, huh? You can’t even apologize still. And now... this?”

“He knows everything,” I said. “Do you not understand?”

“How could...”

Just like that, all color drained from Emily’s face.

She looked wobbly.

Really wobbly.

I moved closer to her to keep her from falling.

She did not want me to do that.

I thought another slap was coming my way but instead Emily just pushed

away from me.

“Get out of my house,” she ordered.

“Yeah? That quick?”

“Get out, Rome. If you really think I would...”

“What? Huh? What happened then?”

“Candice!” Emily cried out. “That’s what happened. Candice! She’s been snooping around like crazy. I had a couple people tell me she was asking all kinds of weird questions about me. And you. I just laughed it off. I didn’t think anything of it. She must have found everything out and went to whoever you talked to.”

“And, what, pretended to be you?”

“Yeah. Is that so farfetched?”

It wasn’t.

But maybe it was.

I wasn’t sure of anything.

“And you just assume it was me,” she said. “And you race over here to start an argument with me.”

“What was I supposed to do? The way you’ve been acting...”

Emily let out a loud laugh.

Not a happy laugh.

An angry laugh.

“Just get out, Rome,” she said. “If something controversial gets posted online about me, I’m done for. Forget the promotion. I might even lose my job.”

“I’ll stop it from happening,” I said. “I’ll talk to Benny.”

“No. Don’t do that. I don’t need any more favors from you, Rome. I don’t need anything from you. No more marriage stuff. No more caring. No more of your *super-active-super-human* sperm either.”

She rolled her eyes and walked toward her kitchen.

I knew I had the chance right there to just grab for her.

Pick her up and kiss her.

Let her cry.

Tell her it would be okay.

Promise the world to her.

Then again, what did I know?

She was right.

And she told me what she wanted.

She wanted me to leave.

“We’re done here, Rome,” she said without looking back at me. “I don’t need cheap words and even cheaper moves right now.”

“I’ve never seen this side of you, Em,” I said.

“I’m not sure I’ve ever seen this side either. So don’t make me say it again, Rome.”

All because I came here to talk?

Yeah, okay, I’m a little pissed off.

Was it that wrong to just assume...

Emily looked back at me.

Her eyes full of anger and tears.

She really wanted me gone.

And I knew she didn’t mean just for today.

Just for this moment.

To let things pass and cool down.

This had a much deeper meaning.

I could see it. I could sense it.

I felt it in my chest. In my heart.

The urge to just walk up to her, hug her and tell her I loved her.

But also knowing the reality of this entire thing.

And the reality was simple.

This was the moment we both knew it was time for a divorce.

Chapter Thirty-Eight

EMILY



ANGER TURNED INTO EMBARRASSMENT.

Pure embarrassment.

I couldn't even figure out why at first.

There were too many thoughts floating around at once.

Of course it came down to one thing. One person. One name.

Candice.

I tried to take the ultra-high road and blame myself.

I tried to have that calm and collected conversation in my head.

Emily. We have to be real here. Is Candice acting like a C-word? Heck yeah she is. But she's got this 'dirt' because of what you've done. You're the one that went out to Vegas alone and ended up... you know... getting married.

And that's okay!

It happens!

It's for fun!

Well, not really for fun.

Marriage is kind of a serious thing.

But without that happening... you know... Candice wouldn't have what she has right now.

And for the record, you're not going to lose your career or anything.

You're a teacher. You've done nothing wrong or unethical that would put any students in harm's way.

The words made perfect sense in my head.

But they didn't sit well with me.

I stormed out of the kitchen with no real direction.

I didn't want food. I didn't want anything to drink. I didn't want to drown my sorrows with salty calories or smooth vodka. I wanted to be in the moment. In the feelings. I wanted to...

I saw my phone light up.

A text from Ellie.

Sorry... but I just have one of those feelings again...

It was uncanny the way Ellie had certain feelings at certain times.

She really was never wrong and it was creepy.

I wasn't going to bother resisting it for one second.

There was no way I was going to pace around my condo alone.

That's what best friends were for, right?



ELLIE PACED WITH ME.

Holding some sage.

Smoke wafting above us.

We looked like a locomotive making a skinny yet wide oval.

“You don't suppose I could have some of that sage and shove it up Candice's tight ass?” I asked.

“No.”

“Do you have potions or spells we can try?”

“Emily, I’m not a witch.”

“Could you be one though? For me? For one night?”

Ellie stopped walking and smiled. “You have a lot going on at once here. We should go one by one. Maybe sit down? We’ve done about fifteen miles walking in the same spot.”

“Listen, Ellie. I’m well aware this is my fault. I got married. Okay? But, you know, you screwed me over on that trip. And now look at all of this? I had it quiet and forgotten. Then you told me to show up to his place. To get a divorce.”

“Are you blaming me?” Ellie asked.

“I didn’t say that.”

“Sounds like you are.”

“I can’t be near Rome!” I cried out.

“Why not, Emily?”

“Because he makes my brain scramble. He makes my panties wet. I look at him and I want to tackle him. I want to touch and taste him. I want him to fuck me until I forget my name. How can I be near that?”

“I think that means you really do love him,” Ellie said.

“No,” I growled. “No. I can’t live like that. I refuse to. It doesn’t work that way for me. It’s over. It’s done. I can’t do any of it anymore.”

“There’s more though,” Ellie said. “There’s something else you need to handle.”

“Candice,” I whispered.

“That’s correct. Don’t let the sage and the energy and the crystals confuse you, Emily. I want to find that bitch and hurt her. You and I can do it. Together. Right now. Let’s just show up and beat her up.”

“*Beat her up?*” I asked. “Do you realize how that sounds? We’re adults. I’ll get fired.”

“Then we wear masks.”

“Ellie. That’s even worse.”

“It is?”

“We are not criminals. I do like the enthusiasm of it all though.”

“She really went too far.”

“She did,” I said. “She did some serious research. She went looking for dirt and she found it. And it shouldn’t even be that big of a deal.”

“Rome felt it was.”

“Because of you.”

“Because he cares about you. He loves you.”

“That I am not entertaining right now, Ellie.”

“Pick a side,” Ellie said. “Either violence or romance!”

That made me laugh. “I’ll figure something out. I’m just venting to you. And you’re my best friend. You want to protect me and I appreciate that. I’m not in the mood for anything crazy tonight though.”

“Good. I can’t drink ever again. Not after the vodka...”

“You really went for it that night.”

“I really did. I regret it. I still do. Just thinking about that awful word makes my stomach curdle.”

“What word?” I asked with a smile. “*Vodka*...?”

Ellie touched her stomach. “Stop it.”

“Maybe we should just get a bunch of junk food and hang out. Ice cream. Cookies. Maybe even go get a birthday cake. Just to eat it.”

“Or just some cupcakes,” Ellie said. “Or just get it all.”

I grabbed Ellie’s shoulders. “That’s exactly what we’re going to do.”

“What?”

“Cupcakes.”

“Yeah? Okay. Cupcakes.”

I smiled really big.

Really evil.

“Emily?” Ellie whispered.

“That word. Cupcakes. Yeah.”

“You’re freaking me out a little,” Ellie said.

I nodded. “Good. Because I know what to do now.”

“You do?”

“Two words...”

“Okay.”

I backed away from Ellie.

It made sense.

Two words.

Bake sale.



THE BAKE SALE.

Right before school starts again.

How could I forget about it?

I had nothing to do with the bake sale, but Candice had her hands in it.

Of course she did.

Up until the point I walked through the front doors of the school toward the table Candice stood behind, I hadn’t seen or talked to her since things exploded with Rome.

I kept a smile on my face.

As soon as Candice looked at me...

Nervously smiling.

That’s what she had.

A nervous smile.

“Emily,” she said. “Haven’t seen you in what feels like forever.”

Candice did her little bimbo tiptoe move around the table. Her fancy shoes clicking on the floor over and over as she closed in on me.

I let her hug me.

I hugged her back.

There were a handful of people around.

Everyone helping to set things up for the bake sale.

“How have you been?” Candice asked. “There’s been a lot going on. Did you get the email about the budget stuff?”

“No.”

“I sent it to you.”

“You didn’t.”

“I said I would. I’m sure I did.”

Candice fumbled for her phone and turned her back to me.

I looked at the table.

I swallowed hard.

“Oh, no,” Candice announced. “This darn phone!”

She lifted her right hand and shook her phone.

She spun around.

“I’m so sorry, Emily,” she said.

People were looking at us now.

Candice looked at someone. “Can you believe this? I hit the button to forward it to you but I didn’t send it! These phones. Right?”

“Yes,” the woman said back to Candice. “My phone does weird things. I swear, it turns its own alarm off. Just the other day I-”

“I’ll show you the email,” Candice said to me, cutting the woman off.

From the corner of my eye I saw the woman’s face turn red.

She looked down.

Defeated.

It made me hate Candice even more.

“You know, I wish they’d include you on this stuff,” Candice said to me. “It makes no sense that they don’t. Tell you what. I’m going to call someone right now. I’ll fix this.”

As Candice started to turn, I grabbed her arm.

She looked at my hand, gasped, then looked at me.

“You’re going to stand right there,” I said. “You fucking bitch.”

I made sure my voice carried to gain the attention of everyone there.

“Excuse me?” Candice asked.

“I know what you fucking did. You did your research, huh? You found out everything about Rome and I. Snooping into our marriage and our personal life. That’s none of your business.”

“Is that so?” Candice asked. “And you’re just one big liar, Emily.”

“You’re fake, Candice. So fake. And you think you can just get away with things.”

“Nothing to get away with. I shared information I found. I didn’t do anything illegal. It’s all there to find. I consider it doing you a favor, Emily. Since you don’t have the guts to face your own issues.”

“You don’t know what you’ve done. The hurt you’ve caused. You probably don’t care either. That’s fine, I suppose. That’s just who you are. Everyone here knows who you are. That you’re a ruthless bitch. Yet you don’t have any guts either. You have to cut people off at the legs to make yourself taller. You’re sad. So sad, Candice.”

“You poor thing,” Candice said. “I can’t imagine what it must feel like to be you. To know now that everyone knows just how fake you are. I can’t take anything you’re saying personally. You’re just mad. Mostly at yourself too. I wish I could help you. I wish I could tell you not to be like that. But it makes sense. You wanted it so bad, Emily. You wanted a family. You couldn’t make it happen. So you just married someone who would take you. That’s why you can’t get pregnant. That’s why you never will. You’re just not meant for it. So give it up.”

I thought I heard everyone gasp around me.

I almost gasped too.

Candice was cold and mean.

There was no getting to her with words.

That was fine.

I didn't really come to the bake sale to confront her with words.

I said what I said to just appear as though I were calm and collected.

Candice began to turn away from me again.

I pulled at her arm again.

"If you don't let me go..."

Her warning faded.

Without hesitation, I reached with my left hand and slipped it under a plate of cupcakes.

Chocolate cupcakes with chocolate frosting and red and yellow sprinkles.

The school colors. How much of a kiss-ass can you be, Candice?

I slammed the plate off Candice's face.

A squishy thud sounded and I stepped away, letting her go.

It was perfect.

The cupcakes and the plate stuck to her face!

Maybe only a couple seconds, but they were the longest and greatest seconds possible.

When the plate hit the floor, it cracked into two pieces.

Candice stood with chunks of chocolate clung to her face.

It looked like she was covered in poop.

I started to laugh.

My eyes filled with tears because I was still hurting.

Then I pointed at Candice and gave her one last clear warning.

"Don't ever fuck with me again, you miserable bitch."

Chapter Thirty-Nine

ROME



I HATED the smell of fancy leather.

And the smell of clean wood.

No, that's not sexual.

I was talking about my lawyer's office.

The aura of a lawyer's office was like that of a hospital.

Threatening anxiety and knowing it's going to cost a fucking fortune whether you get good news or bad.

I called him Hawthorne because that was the sign outside his building. And because he hated being referred to by his last name.

I figured for what he charged me per second I could call him whatever I wanted.

I also could pick where to meet, meaning I avoided his office.

I ordered a beer and the bartender chatted me up for a few minutes about the upcoming season.

He recognized me but didn't bother me, asking for pictures and autographs.

There were two women sitting together, enjoying a drink with their lunch. Both bumping shoulder to shoulder, giggling, nibbling at the straws from their overpriced mixed drinks, both with beautiful blue eyes. Both with eyes that made the old version of Rome want to run wild.

Everyone remember the old version of Rome?

The one where I'd easily just walk over to the two women.

Nestle between them and say something stupid.

Oh, I didn't mean to come between you. Or did I?

Did you like when I came between you both?

And because I was Rome, they'd giggle some more.

Drinks, laughing, dumb jokes, flirty eyes...

All with one goal in mind.

To get those two beautiful woman back to a hotel room and get them naked.

Scatter their clothes all over the place so that when they had to leave, I could just sit up in bed and watch them walk around naked, picking up clothing, trading it off to the other person to make sure they left with the same amount of clothes as when they arrived.

Sure, they'd leave without an autograph from me... in ink.

But they'd leave with an autograph they'd never forget.

The tip of my tongue cutting between their legs, dancing playfully against their clit, one at a time, writing my name.

Waiting to see who made the most noise.

Who was the loudest.

Who would come first and then who-

A hand grabbed my shoulder and my thoughts instantly vanished.

"Hawthorne," I said, looking back at my lawyer. "Want a drink?"

"Seltzer water is fine," he said. "I have the papers for you."

Those six words.

Fuck.

We needed to sit somewhere more private.

I took my beer and Hawthorne got his seltzer water.

We went outside and sat down.

The ocean as the backdrop.

Hawthorne handed me a folder. "It's all there. When you're ready I will make sure that she gets hers too."

"Nothing funny, right?" I asked. "No bullshit?"

"Well, if you mean no protections for you, then yes. I think this is a very dumb idea, Rome. I think there's a much better way to handle this to ensure your financial safety."

"It'll embarrass her."

"You care that much? Odd for someone who wants a divorce."

"It's not really me that wants it. I'm just facing the fact that sometimes you have to do the right thing."

"The right thing would be to protect yourself."

"She's not that type of person."

"No offense, Rome, but I've heard that many times. Couples who think they can do this without a fight. And it takes a very fast turn for the worse and...."

Hawthorne shut himself up.

"You know while I understand this is difficult for you, I'm going to need to talk about compensation."

"Fucking lawyers."

"Fucking hockey players," Hawthorne threw back at me.

"Easy there. I've made you a lot of money. You love me as a client. My antics are *just enough* to get me into trouble but never too far where you end up in a courtroom for weeks at a time. You should consider yourself lucky and give this one to me for free."

"Yeah?" Hawthorne asked. "Ask your billionaire boss for tickets right behind the bench for two full seasons. Plus food, drink, and parking."

“That’s insane,” I said.

“So is asking me to work for free,” Hawthorne said. He stood up. “I’ll send the bill to your accountant. I won’t mark down what it’s for. Just legal. You can handle the lies if you want to lie to everyone.”

“Yeah. Thanks.”

Hawthorne walked away.

I didn’t read over the papers.

I didn’t care what they said.

I wasn’t a lawyer.

The only thing that mattered was Emily getting what she wanted all along.

Time for me to turn off the constant charm and all that.

Time to be real.

I had a hockey season starting soon.

She had a school year about to begin.

The last thing both of us needed was our crazy marriage holding us back.

Especially for her name and her reputation.

And, hell, maybe a divorce would get her some sympathy points for that promotion she wanted.

I would never let her struggle or suffer. Ever.

She meant the world to me.

She showed me what it felt like to actually fall in love.

Me.

Rome.

Falling in love.

Nobody in their right mind would have predicted that.

And now I was getting a hard dose of reality that sometimes love hurts. Sometimes love doesn’t work out the way you want it to. Sometimes you just have to say... goodbye.

I closed the folder.

I stood up.
Except...
I was Rome.
I was goddamn Rome!
Divorce? Quit? Give up?
That wasn't my style.
Ever.
So why would it change now?
Confusion swept over me.
I needed to talk to Emily.
Or maybe I didn't.
Maybe I didn't need to speak to Emily directly.
That's when I realized just who I needed to talk to.



THE DOOR OPENED and Ellie stepped back. “Oh. Wow. This is a first. A big, sexy hockey player showing up. What contest did I win?”

I thrust my hand out and gave Ellie the divorce papers. “I don't want to break her heart. But I don't know what else to do at the moment.”

Ellie glanced at the papers, then at me.

“This is all my fault,” she said. “Just trying to help her out.”

“Yeah, so do it again. Light a candle. Wave a feather around or something.”

“Did you come here to attack me, Rome?”

“No. I've never been in love before. But now I am. And this is...”

Ellie reached for my hand. “Oh, you sweet thing. You're really in love with her. You love my best friend. You want to be married to her for real now.”

“Is that the worst thing in the world?”

“No.”

Ellie took me to her living room.

When I tried to sit on the couch she snapped her fingers and made me sit on the floor.

She put a table between us, then lit a candle and some incense.

The stuff smelled horrible and made my nose tingle.

“Why do you love her?” Ellie asked.

“What?”

“Answer me. I want to know why you love my best friend. Tell me the truth. Even if it’s just because of her body.”

“I’m sure you’ve seen her naked a few times. Best friends and all. So, yeah, her body...” I cleared my throat. “This isn’t about her body. This is about her.”

“Her soul?”

“I don’t know anything about the soul,” I said. “I love her. I love her heart. I love her eyes. I love her hair. How some random strands are just curly. Why? Sometimes I see something and I like it. Okay? I like the way she sleeps. I like her cheeks. Not just ass cheeks either! How about that? Me? Loving something besides a woman’s boobs, butt, and... you know...”

“Pussy,” Ellie said.

“Yes. Pussy.”

“Go on, Rome,” Ellie said.

“It’s everything. She’s sweet. She’s innocent. Yet she has a serious side to her. A tough side too. She doesn’t show it often, but when she does, look out. I just want her. I want her in every possible way. And I want to give her a baby. I hate that it’s not working. I was terrified something was wrong with my sperm. That’s why I celebrated the way I did. And, yeah, I realize now that made me look like a complete asshole. Because it means something with her body isn’t working. But I want whatever she wants. The best doctors? The best treatments? Maybe we just don’t have kids. Maybe we find another

way. I just... I just want her.”

I took a deep breath.

My chest felt heavy.

Across from me, Ellie’s eyes were filled with tears.

She blinked fast and a tear rolled down her right cheek.

“True love,” she whispered. “You just let it all out, Rome. You just crossed the threshold. These divorce papers are the easy way out of this. But you just crossed the line, knowing that being married to my best friend is going to be a complicated mess but so worth it.”

“I know that, Ellie. That’s why I’m here.”

“What do you want me to do? Call her up and tell her to be nice to you?”

“No. That’s not what I want. I thought you’d have some advice.”

“I don’t do advice. You know what the answer is.”

“If the answer was that simple, then why would I...”

I stopped talking.

I stared at Ellie.

She wiped away the tear on her cheek.

I stood up.

She nodded at me.

She knew I had to leave.

Of course I had to see Ellie to make sense of it.

In some weird way, Ellie caused all of this.

Right from the beginning.

Seeing her reminded me of that.

Thinking about spending forever with Emily didn’t bother me.

I now had to offer the biggest grand gesture of my life to a woman.

And it didn’t involve showing off my cock.

Chapter Forty

EMILY



GARY SAT on the other side of his desk.

The way he stared...

It was the absolute classic cliché of *being sent to the principal's office* kind of vibe.

I mean, all I did was smash some cupcakes into Candice's face.

After all, Gary was the one who told me not to take any crap from Candice.

His exact word for her?

Pest.

Remember that, Gary? Huh?

He reached for a pen and rolled it between his fingers.

"I'm not sure if you want me to speak or not," I said. "What I can tell you is that I made sure to pay for everything that had been damaged. Just to ensure the school and the kids aren't the ones who suffer from that situation."

"You're not apologetic."

"I'm not so sure I should be," I said. "She's a pest. Right?"

Gary's jaw tightened and flexed. "I'm going to really hope that a private conversation isn't going to be used against me right now. Or justify the actions of an adult."

Now, normally that was the kind of backhanded warning that would shut me down a little, out of respect for who Gary was and who I was. Sometimes that's how it went in life. If you wanted your job and everything that came with it, you just had to shut up and sit there, nod and agree, then apologize until you could go home and drown yourself in some wine, then take a hot shower and scream and cry a little.

Here was the thing...

Nothing about my life was normal.

It hadn't been for some time now.

It was the craziest summer of my life.

Instead of relaxing, reading and subtly thinking about the upcoming school year, all I did was hang out and have sex with a gorgeous hockey player.

Not that it should have had any connection to the moment in front of me...

"They were cupcakes, Gary," I said. "Not weapons."

"Do you realize what she's threatened?"

"Let her. The weaponization of a cupcake. I can't wait to hear how that plays out. She ran her mouth so I filled it for her. It was for her own good, you know?"

"There's a video circulating online now..."

I didn't want to do it but I laughed.

I had nothing to do with the video.

The woman that Candice had insulted just before I hit her in the face with the cupcakes? She must have sensed something was going to happen with Candice and me. Or maybe she just wanted to record Candice acting like a *see-you-next-Tuesday* and show it to someone.

Anyway, the woman secretly recorded the entire thing.

Which meant everything Candice said was heard too.

I didn't just walk up to Candice and pick a fight.

The video ended up being shared like crazy.

It was a little bit funny to think about.

All of sudden these teachers and adults were acting like kids with a viral video.

Someone did some editing on it too.

They made a GIPHY of the cupcakes hitting Candice's face.

Just that one second part.

Then someone made a screenshot of the entire cupcake platter stuck to Candice's face.

A few got even more creative and added sound effects and music to it.

"We look foolish," Gary said.

"I don't have anything to say for myself," I said. "If that's the point of this conversation."

"I've never seen this side of you."

"You've never needed to. I'm sorry that you have to now. What happened between Candice and me is personal. It's personal matters. Personal lives. I will apologize for things getting touchy on school property. I'm not going to sit here like some scared kid and start snitching. What's going on with Candice and me is between her and I. No matter what she wants."

"I'm left in an unfortunate position, Emily."

"I'm sure you are. But that's also why you're getting paid almost half a million a year, Gary. Right?"

I thought Gary's jaw was going to literally smack off his desk.

He dropped his pen.

Shock on his face.

I stood up. "Are we done? Are you going to fire me? Force me to quit? Just get it off your chest, Gary. No time to waste. I would prefer to go get my

classroom in order for another amazing year of teaching. That's what matters. I didn't mean to throw your words against you. We both know Candice is a pest. We both know slapping a few cupcakes against her face is the least of what she deserves. I also understand the position you're in. So no need to treat me like a child, Gary. I'm an adult. I'm a big girl. I can handle myself and my life."

Can you, Emily?

You really think you can handle your life?

Gary had nothing else to say to me other than the cliché comment that he'd be in touch.

My best guess was that he'd let me get the classroom ready to go and then fire me.

Less work for him.

Just replace me with someone else.

Which meant I was on a roll here.

Losing my husband.

And now probably losing my job.

I walked down the hallway and thrust my right fist into the air.

I swore I had seen that in a movie before.

It wasn't a good time to try and think about movies.

All I wanted to do was cry.



MID-CRY, the power went out.

No warning, not that there would be.

I sat there on the couch, watching a show about older horses getting placed at some horse farm to give them the best quality of life.

Casually weeping when I needed to.

The rest of the time, hugging a pillow, my throat clenching, tears forever

filling my eyes.

And then, the power was gone.

TV. Lights. Everything.

Duh. That's what a power outage is.

I waited a few seconds, quietly hoping it would kick back on.

It didn't.

I tossed the pillow to my side and walked to a window and looked out.

Demanding to see evidence of an actual outage and that it wasn't just my condo...

Which it wasn't.

My electric was paid right on time.

The entire building was out.

I grabbed my phone and began to search for local outages.

It took a few minutes but sure enough, a little dot popped up and when I touched it, there was a notice about the outage.

According the first estimate, I'd be without power for a good four hours.

I looked around, debating what to do next.

I could easily just cry alone, in the dark.

Nothing wrong with that.

I had everything I needed, just minus electricity.

And even then, I didn't need that.

So I poured myself a glass of wine, dug out some dusty candles, and turned on some music using my phone.

When I lit the candles, they crackled and smelled weird for a second or two.

Just like that, my living room had some light.

A dancing kind of light.

The way the candle flame flickered and rocked back and forth, making shadows on the walls look a tiny bit spooky.

But I wasn't afraid of that.

I was afraid of losing my job.

Of actually losing my husband.

Somehow it all felt connected.

Like it was an all or nothing kind of thing.

I began to think about my life if I never showed up to Rome's place.

If I just let it all go.

Ignored Ellie.

I would have never caught him with some clingy woman and helped to kick her out.

I would have never felt that wild lust burning inside my core.

That dam of need and emotion that only cracked and then flooded once Rome was in my life.

It felt a little unfair to consider trading back all those glorious orgasms though.

It also felt weird to sit there and really consider my feelings for my husband.

You'd think most people would have gone through this already.

Meeting someone. Dating someone. *Fucking someone.*

Going through all those necessary stages in a relationship before even considering marriage.

Not me!

Send me to Las Vegas alone and I'm coming back home married!

I heard a knock at my door and I popped up.

My mind flashed images of some guys outside the door from the power company wanting to get my condo working first.

Which was dumb.

Why not call Rome? He pretended to be an electrician! Remember that? He could fix this!

That had been the first big lie I told Candice.

A lie that blew up in my face and sent her scurrying down a rabbit hole to

find out the rest of the truth of who Rome and I were to each other.

I carried a candle to my front door and opened it.

I let out a way-too-loud laugh when I saw Rome standing there.

“Sorry,” I said. “I was just thinking about you.”

“Was I naked?” Rome asked.

“No, Rome. I was joking with myself. That you pretended to be an electrician. That you could fix this...”

“Well, I can tell you how it happened,” he said. “There’s a car accident about two blocks away. Looks like someone hit a pole and messed up the lines.”

“Oh. Great. I hope everyone is okay. So I guess I’m without power for a little while.”

“Are you afraid of the dark, Em?”

“No, Rome. I’m not. I’m afraid of being near you.”

“Me? Why me? What did I do?”

“You ruined my life. Everything is a mess because of you.”

I was hoping that would hurt his feelings, but it was Rome.

Nothing bothered him.

“What you call a mess, I call an opportunity,” he said. “I came over to ask you out on a date. And since you have no power...”

“Oh, you just assume I’m going to go anywhere with you now?”

Rome put his hand out. “Em, come on. Let’s make this right.”

“Make this... right... how?”

Rome wiggled his fingers.

I reached for his hand.

He inched down and blew out the candle in my hand.

Then I felt his lips brush against my cheek.

Then move to my left ear.

“Em, we’re going back to Vegas... right now...”

Chapter Forty-One

ROME



THIS WAS NOT *The Vegas Story, Part 2*.

This was... my gesture to my wife.

A private jet.

A quick flight to Vegas.

In some weird way, leaving her condo behind, in the dark, it just felt like it was meant to be.

Like all that weird crap that Ellie believed in actually meant something and mattered.

We landed and a car waited for us.

“Look familiar?” I whispered to Emily as we drove into the heart of the lights.

“Too familiar,” she said. “I can’t believe I’m doing this. I can’t believe I have nothing with me.”

“You have a small bag.”

“A small bag... how long are we staying here?”

“That depends on you, Em.”

“Oh?”

“The private jet will be waiting,” I said. “You can get on it anytime you’d like. Or me. Or us together. Whatever you want.”

“What is this, Rome? Is this some...”

That’s when I reached into my bag and took out the divorce papers.

I handed her the folder just as the car came to a stop out front of a fancy hotel.

Someone opened the back door for me, ready to escort my wife and I to our room.

Everyone was happy.

Jumpy and cheery.

The lights were bright, flashing and glittery.

The smell of food.

The aura of booze.

The sound of casino games all around.

And yet I stood there, waiting for Emily to emerge from the car.

She did, clutching her bag and the divorce papers tight.

Her face made of stone.

As we passed through the first casino to get to the elevators, I grabbed Emily’s hand and pulled her toward a slot machine.

“Let’s see how this is going to go,” I said.

I reached for the machine and she smacked my hand away.

“No, Rome. This isn’t some joke. You just handed me divorce papers.”

Emily wasn’t in the mood for some fun and games just yet.

Ironic enough, we walked away and someone jumped for the machine.

First pull on the lever... the woman won five hundred dollars.

The mood remained tense all the way up the elevators and to our room.

Emily didn’t say another word to me.

Even when we got into the overpriced suite that overlooked the city, she still didn’t talk to me.

In fact, she walked into the bedroom, slammed the door and locked me out.

I stood outside the door, smiling, nodding.

A dose of reality seemed to really hit her hard.

The silence made time tick by extra slow.

I ended up sitting on the floor next to the door, waiting for Emily to make a move.

Then I saw movement from the corner of my right eye.

I looked down and saw the corner of a piece of paper sliding under the door.

“Really, Em?” I called out.

The paper kept coming.

I finally reached down and grabbed.

It was the last page of the divorce papers.

Signed by me.

Now signed by Emily.

All I had to do was give it to my lawyer to get filed and... *boom*. Single.

“You think I wanted you to sign this?” I called out. “I wanted to see your reaction, Em. I can file this right now. You can have the room to yourself for the night if you want. Or I can fly Ellie out. You two can tear up the town. Single and ready to fuck.”

The door opened, Emily stepped out and looked down.

She gasped when she saw me sitting.

“Is that all you think about? Sex? Everything with you is just sex.”

“Why’d you sign this?” I asked.

“Because you did.”

“I signed it to see what you’d do.”

“So you didn’t want to sign it?” Emily asked.

“No, Em.” I turned and propped myself up on one knee in front of her. “I want to be married to you.”

“What the fuck is this? Some kind of weird mind game?”

“No. Just making sure you know your options.”

“Who goes to Las Vegas to get married?” Emily asked.

“See, I thought of it this way... it’s like this energy reversal thing. Right? We come back here and undo what was done. We get divorced. Undo all that stuff. You go back home and you’ll get your promotion and I’m sure everything else will work out.”

“You said you don’t want that.”

“I said I don’t want to get divorced. I’m in love with you. I don’t know if I’ve ever been in love before. I’m not sure what the rules are.”

“I’m not sure taking a woman on a private jet to Las Vegas and handing her signed divorced papers is the way to show love.”

“It’s my best way of feeling vulnerable in front of you, Em. The papers are signed. My heart is ready to be crushed by you.”

“I hate that you can somehow make things romantic.”

“Would you rather me be dirty?” I whispered. “Remind you of what you’re going to be missing out on...”

My eyes saw the pockets of Emily’s jeans.

I grabbed them and pulled her toward me.

She let out a playful cry and dug her hands into my hair.

My right hand lifted her shirt and I pressed my nose against her warm skin.

I shut my eyes and felt my heart actually racing for a second or two.

I then hurried to unbutton her jeans.

Stripping them down to her ankles.

She grabbed my shoulders for balance as she stepped out.

Next... *goodbye panties.*

My hands wasted no time in grabbing for her ass.

My lips kissed and caressed the stubble on her mound.

Then I looked up at her.

“This isn’t proof of marriage,” I said. “Just for the record. I will forever go down on you, Em. This is just me being nice.”

I winked and eased my tongue between her legs.

Tasting her sweet flesh.

Rolling the tip of my tongue against her tender clit.

Her knees bent and she sighed.

Literally melting into my mouth.



“SIXTEEN.”

“Hit me,” Emily said.

“What are you doing?” I whispered. “I think you’re supposed to wait. Or hold. Or whatever it is.”

“I’m gambling.”

“With my money.”

“Hit me,” Emily said again with a smile.

The dealer put down a seven of hearts.

Bust.

I looked at Emily. “You just gambled four hundred dollars in about ten minutes.”

“What are you going to do about it? Divorce me again?”

That had become the running joke now with Emily.

Two fruity drinks in her and she was waving around our divorce papers for fun, playfully threatening me with them.

I stood by what I told her earlier.

It was her decision to make.

Plus, how could I ever get mad at her?

She was beautiful.

She was perfect.

Not to mention I could still taste her on my tongue.

That sweet lust.

That sweeter cum too.

I wrapped my right hand around her waist and pulled her from the blackjack table.

At the rate she gambled and lost money, I'd end up needing to play hockey in the off-season just to survive.

"You really suck at gambling," I said to her.

"Like you're any better?"

I curled my lip and spun around.

I cashed in two hundred more dollars on more chips for the blackjack table.

Four hands later I was up two hundred dollars.

I cashed out, looked at Emily, and grinned.

She grabbed my hand and next thing I knew, we were running out of the casino.

"Where to, Em?" I asked.

"You'll see," she said.

Our next stop?

Some obscure t-shirt shop.

That's where she grabbed a white t-shirt that was one size too small for me.

PULL MY LEVER IF YOU FEEL LUCKY!

That's what the shirt said.

"You can pick out something for me," she said.

"What I want to pick out for you they don't sell here," I whispered to her.
"Something thin, lacey, see-through..."

"Go pay for that," she said.

"I have to pay for the shirt you picked out for me?" I asked.

Emily smiled.

I paid for the shirt.
Then I had to wiggle my way into it.
It was way too tight.
But I wore it anyway.
The entire time... Emily still carried around the divorce papers.
“Two more stops,” she said. “Maybe three.”
“It’s your night, sweetheart,” I said.
The next place we went was some cheap corner food place.
Emily surprised me when she ordered a full rack of barbecue ribs.
They looked slimy and old, but she insisted.
Once again, I had to pay.
And she made me carry the food.
Next, we walked maybe half a block and she stopped me.
“Stand right here,” she said. “Count to five and then walk with your eyes closed.”
“What?” I asked.
“Rome.”
“This makes no sense, Em.”
“Just shut up and do it. Okay?”
“Okay,” I said. “If that’s what you want. Sure.”
Emily went into another souvenir shop.
I counted to five and shut my eyes.
Then I started to walk.
I made it three steps before I felt something hit me.
Hard.
My eyes popped open as the container of barbecue ribs smashed against my chest and all over the too-tight white t-shirt I wore.
Emily stood on the other side of the door, grinning ear to ear.
That’s when it made sense.
She wanted to recreate how we met.

How I opened a door and hit her by accident.
So now she did the same to me, except hers was on purpose.
“I was hoping you’d fall,” she said.
She moved away from the door and it shut behind her.
“You want me to fall, sweetheart?” I asked. “Fine.”
I tossed the food to the ground and I grabbed for her.
I pulled her against me and purposely toppled down to the ground.
Emily on top of me.
People all around us.
“There,” I said. “I fell. For you. Again.”
“Don’t be romantic.”
“Why? Too afraid you’re in love with me?”
“I can’t believe how much I’m in love with you, Rome,” she said.
“Enough to sign divorce papers and then let me go down on you, huh?”
“That was just for fun,” Emily whispered.
“Want to do something crazy?”
“What else can we possibly do to be crazy, Rome?”
I turned my head and smiled.
Emily did the same.
Directly across the street from us...
A wedding chapel.
Get divorced and then remarried in the same night?
Sounds like something Emily and I would do.

Chapter Forty-Two

EMILY



A LAS VEGAS MORNING.

Waking up to the room filled with sunlight and my husband between my legs.

His tongue lapping with speed.

Those evil, sexy eyes of his meeting mine, devouring me.

I grab for him over and over, wanting him to move up.

I want his cock, not his tongue.

But he's so stubborn and demanding.

And it just feels so good.

So I curl my fingers around the sheets, arch my back and groan.

I put my feet on the bed and lift my ass up off the bed.

I rock my hips.

I love the way his tongue moves between my legs.

My dear husband.

I smile as I think about last night.

Getting married. Again.

*Covered in barbecue sauce.
I have no idea if what we did was even legal.
I have no clue what papers are what.
Rome told me his lawyer would figure it out and then...
Oh. Fuck.
I'm starting to finish.
I close my eyes and feel that warm rush pushing throughout my entire
body.
That's the thing about Rome.
An orgasm from him... or with him... or caused by him...
It's not just between my legs.
It's not just my inner thighs or my lower belly.
It's not just my pussy.
It's my entire body.
How does he do that?
I have no fucking clue.
But I fucking love it.
Oh... do I fucking love it...*



I GROWLED as I felt the head of Rome's cock press deeper into my mouth.
His left hand smacked against the shower wall so hard I thought he was going to make a cracked tile handprint.
“Fuck, Em,” he groaned. “You feel so good. Your lips wrapped around my cock...”
He put his back into the shower water.
It caused a sudden waterfall down his body and to my face and mouth.
My left hand was latched against his leg, nails digging in hard.
My right hand gripped his heavy root, pumping, wanting him to come in

my mouth.

I wanted to taste him.

I needed to taste him.

I gently eased back, my lips sliding along his long shaft.

My mouth popped free and I put my head back, then groaned.

I took a couple deep breaths.

My right hand stroked him fast. Hard.

Not even a second or two later I felt Rome's fingers grab for my hair and guide my mouth back to his cock.

I loved that he loved my mouth on his cock.

That he desired it. That he needed it.

Rome held my wet hair tight and began to thrust himself.

I groaned each time I felt him sliding all the way to the back of my tongue.

That perfect, thickening feeling.

It made no sense that his cock was able to get even bigger, but trust me, it did.

That was the only warning I would ever get from him that he was ready to finish.

That was all I needed.

Rome let out a long grunt as his body jumped.

My mouth instantly began filling with his warmth.

Spilling all over my tongue, creeping down my throat.

I clawed my nails up his body and gently moved with his cock.

Feeling him throbbing, pumping, just giving and giving...

... or I should say coming and coming.

I had no intention of stopping.

I made Rome pull his cock back and out of my mouth for good.

He then lifted me to my feet.

We stood staring at each other.

The shower water smacking against his back, a warm mist jumping over his shoulders and hitting my face.

His hands touched my face.

Thumbs stroked my cheeks.

Thumbs touched my bottom lip.

I smiled.

He pressed his body against mine.

I felt his cock still throbbing.

A raging heartbeat.

He kissed my forehead and then moved his hands to my sides.

He turned sideways so the hot water hit my body too.

Together we shared a shower.

In silence.

The sound of the water like heavy rain if you closed your eyes.

I rested my head against Rome's strong, wet chest.

I felt safe and comfortable.

When I thought about the fact that we were in a hotel room in Las Vegas and had gotten married for the second time, it made me want to laugh out loud.

“What’s the plan for today, Em?”

“Fly out of here and never come back again.”

“What? Never? You know I have to play hockey here, right?”

“I’ll watch from home.”

“You’re going to trust me to come here?”

I slipped my right hand between our bodies.

I grabbed Rome's cock.

It was still pulsing...

“You do anything stupid to me ever, Rome, and I’ll twist your cock until it pops free. Then I can keep it for myself. And then I don’t need you for anything ever again.”

“That’s the sexiest thing a woman has ever said to me,” Rome whispered as he lowered his mouth to mine.

I was a little surprised that he wanted to kiss me after what I just got done doing to him.

But Rome was always full of surprises.

And kisses.

And... his cock began to thicken again, in my hand.

I broke the kiss with a small gasp, put my head back and shut my eyes.

I listened to the shower water.

I felt Rome’s tongue slither down my neck.

Kiss after kiss, making a trail down to my breasts.

His hands latched tight to my hips.

He spun me around in a second.

He bent me forward even quicker.

Those huge hands of his grabbing at my hips.

Pulling me back against him.

His cock touching me... between my legs...

Okay, fine, one last fuck in Las Vegas before we leave!



I WAS ON A PRIVATE JET, high up in the sky when the email came through.

I saw Gary’s name and my heart froze for a second.

Quickly, I shut my phone screen off and didn’t want to look.

“Can I get a drink?” I asked Rome.

“You’re asking me? For permission?”

“No. I want a drink.”

“You okay, Em? You seem nervous?”

“I’m fine.”

“Your hands are twitching. Is it the plane? Don’t like flying...?”

“No, Rome. It’s not the plane. I’m fine. I just want a fucking drink.”

Rome stood up and inched by me to get me a drink.

I glanced at my phone again.

I looked at the email again.

Gary’s name.

My phone declared *no subject*.

Then to make it worse... there was no body of the email.

It failed to load.

“Damn you,” I growled.

“Em, talk to me,” Rome said.

He stood next to me, holding a glass.

I grabbed the drink from him and drank it all in one gulp.

It was something stiff.

It burned my throat.

My eyes watered.

“I can’t get this email to load,” I coughed.

“Let me try,” he said.

I handed Rome my phone.

A few seconds later, he handed the phone back and the email was fully loaded.

“What is it, Em?”

Rome crouched down next to me.

“Gary. My big boss. You know what I did to Candice...”

“Yeah. The cupcakes to the face.”

“Yeah. I kind of acted like a bitch to him too. He wanted me to apologize and I refused. I was mean.”

“He deserved it. Candice deserved it too.”

“Not if it costs me my job,” I said, shaking my phone.

“Oh. Is that...”

I shrugged my shoulders and knew I had to read the email.

“I’m not fired,” I whispered.

“That’s good.”

“Yeah. I guess. I really thought he was going to fire me. I can’t...”

I kept reading and my throat felt dry.

I looked away from my phone for a second.

“Need another drink?” Rome whispered.

“Probably. But I’ll hold off. It is what it is, Rome.”

“Meaning?”

I turned and looked at my husband. “Candice got the promotion.”

“No. Fuck that. No way.”

I nodded. “Yeah. She’s *more fit for the job*.”

“What does that even mean?” Rome asked. “Fit? As in physically fit? Or what? Or is this somehow my fault? Is it because we’re married? Do you want me to do something? I can call this guy. I can show up. I can ask him... you know... what the fuck, right?”

I reached out and touched Rome’s face.

I took a deep breath.

“This isn’t cool, Em,” he said. “I hate this for you.”

“I think I hate it too. Candice is going to be terrible at this job.”

“She’s going to fail.”

“They’re going to come begging for me then,” I said.

“And you’re going to tell them to fuck off.”

“Oh yeah. Big time. I’m going to make them pay me so much...”

Rome inched closer to me.

His forehead touched mine. “You sure you’re okay, Em?”

“No. I’m crushed. I really wanted this promotion. But I can’t change their minds. I can’t be a baby about the decision. Plus, let Candice celebrate. I’m the one on a private jet with a sexy hockey player, right?”

“Damn right you are,” Rome said.

“And if I asked you to go down on my right now...”

“Don’t ask, sweetheart. Just demand it. And my tongue will be between your legs so fucking fast...”

“I love you, Rome,” I said.

“I think that’s the first time you’ve ever said that to me. I love you too, Em.”

Instead of using tongue between my legs, Rome simply just kissed me.

And that was pretty damn hot too.

Chapter Forty-Three

ROME



I HAD the craziest dream ever.

I was playing hockey. Naked.

And instead of a hockey stick, I used my cock.

The tip of my cock was super cold from rubbing against the ice, but I managed to keep control of the puck and even score a goal.

Jago was in the dream, impressed by the size and usage of my cock.

There was nobody in the arena stands though.

Except for Emily.

She cheered me on.

Oh, she was naked too.

Jumping up and down, her breasts bouncing so beautifully.

I stared at her and groaned and felt my cock becoming harder by the second.

No longer able to be used as a hockey stick.

It was more of a railroad crossing bar.

The dream faded away and I opened my eyes to a blissful morning.

In bed with my wife.

My wife.

It's real this time!

We were both sober and ready and had some fun with it!

Again, I wasn't sure what was legal and not.

Which marriage counted and which one didn't.

Nor did either of us really care.

We were in love. We were married.

Life was going to be epic forever now.

I stared at the ceiling and took a deep breath.

Between my legs, my cock raged hard and thick.

I slowly began to roll to my right side.

Fully intending on grabbing my wife, kissing her, and then fucking her.

“Morning, sunshine!”

The voice wasn't my wife's voice.

And the face staring back at me wasn't my wife's either.

It was Ellie!

In my bed!

“What the fuck?” I screamed.

I began to kick at the covers but I quickly stopped.

I was naked!

I was hard!

My morning wood...

I grabbed the top cover and rolled out of the bed, hitting the floor with a thud.

Luckily I landed on my right shoulder and not my cock.

Could you imagine?

If I broke my cock?

I'd be done!

Finished!

Ellie appeared again, at the edge of the bed, staring down at me.

“This is a dream,” I said. “This has to be a dream. I would never be in bed with you.”

“Wow, thanks for the vote of confidence,” she said.

“It’s not that. You’re pretty. You know that. I mean... I just...”

“You’re just married to my best friend?” Ellie asked.

“Yes.”

“And you have a very visible erection right now?”

There was no use trying to hide it.

Unless I had a chainsaw and cut the thing down.

I shrugged my shoulders.

“You know, I once read that guys get hard in the morning because they have to pee,” Ellie said.

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t know? How could you not know? Do you have to pee?”

“Ellie, what the fuck is going on right now?” I growled.

She began to laugh.

“What the fuck is this?” I heard Emily’s voice cry out.

Ellie’s eyes widened.

Her face said, *oh no, we’re caught!*

But there was nothing to be caught...

I scrambled and jumped to my feet.

Ellie sat up in bed.

Emily stood at the door.

“Oh?” Emily asked. “Really? My husband and my best friend? In bed together?”

“We’re not in bed together,” I said. “I threw myself out of the bed when I saw it was Ellie.”

Ellie looked back at me. “Once again, thanks for the confidence, Rome.”

“I already told you you’re pretty,” I whispered to Ellie.

“You think my best friend is pretty?” Emily asked.

I looked at my wife. “Em...”

“And you’re naked!”

“I have a blanket on,” I said.

“The blanket is hanging on your dick like a coat on a hook!”

I looked down and... well... yeah...

“This boner is not for Ellie,” I announced. “It’s not because of Ellie. It’s because of a dream.”

“I thought it was morning wood,” Ellie said. “That you had to go pee.”

“Have you two been talking about Rome’s boner?” Emily asked.

“This is insane,” I said. “Nobody is talking about my boner. Ellie asked about it. If morning wood meant I had to go pee. I didn’t know she was in our bed. I was having a dream about you, Em. You were naked!”

“You were dreaming of me while in bed with my best friend?” Emily asked.

“What were you doing in the bed?” I snapped at Ellie.

“I’m happy,” Ellie said.

“Happy in bed with my husband?” Emily asked.

I stepped to the side and found my jeans on the floor.

I made a daring move and grabbed them, then spun around.

That left my bare ass visible, but I had no choice.

I hurried to climb into my jeans which then obviously covered up both my ass and my dick.

Even though it wasn’t very comfortable to tuck my morning wood into my jeans.

It was still obvious I had a semi-boner raging.

“I need some answers here,” I said as I turned back around.

“So do I,” Emily said. “I sneak out of bed to make some coffee and I come back to find you two together?”

“We’re not together!” I yelled.

“Just tell him about the threesome,” Ellie said.

“Wait. What?” I started to smile. “Three is my favorite number.”

“Ellie,” Emily said. “Look what you did now.”

“Wait,” I said.

Ellie winked at me. “Sorry, Rome. Had to tease a little.”

“I knew that,” I snapped. “That’s why I said what I said. A threesome? With you? No thanks. Pass. Not interested.”

“So I am ugly to you?”

“I never said that.”

“Will you two stop it,” Emily said. “Ellie, get out of my bed. Get away from my husband.”

“Can I say what I have to say now?” Ellie asked.

“As long as you don’t try to fuck my husband,” Emily said.

“That would not happen,” I said. “I’m loyal to you, Em. I love you, sweetheart.”

“I know that,” Emily said.

“Just shut up!” Ellie yelled. She climbed to her feet, standing on the bed. “I wanted to cherish a moment with you both. This beautiful journey between you two. I feel responsible for this in so many ways, yet I just knew it was there. I always knew it was there.”

“Done now?” Emily asked.

“I want to talk about love and energy,” Ellie said.

“Ellie,” I said.

She snapped her fingers and pointed at me. “I never got to go to a wedding. I never got to give a speech. This is my moment.”

I shut my mouth.

So did Emily.

“There’s a feeling,” Ellie said. “The feeling is energy and energy is the feeling. You see someone and you just know. Those who fight it end up waiting forever. Those who ignore it end up alone. You two ran with it. The

connection was just so instant. Now, did it take a little time to navigate? Sure. That's fine. But fate brought you both together. The forever kind of together. The stuff we all dream of. I can light ten million candles and wait for a sign... but I never needed to do that with you two. It was always there. So bright and vibrant. Your love can light the world. Your love can carry the universe. Your love..."

Ellie broke down in tears and dropped to her knees.

Emily looked at me and motioned for the bed.

Then things got weird again.

Weird had always been my thing in life.

Two women in a bed? Sure.

But to climb into bed with my wife and her best friend?

That was a new one for me.

There we were...

Emily hugging Ellie.

Me hugging both Emily and Ellie.

All of us hugging and touching.

Absolutely nothing sexual about the situation.

Ellie clutching onto Emily and me.

Ellie sniffled. "I'm just happy for you both." She took a deep breath.

"You're going to get another boner, aren't you, Rome?"

"Not unless you dig your nails into my skin," I said.

Emily slapped my shoulder as Ellie laughed.

"I love you, Ellie," Emily said. "And I mean this nicely, get out of my bed. I never want to see you and my husband in bed together ever again."

"Deal," Ellie said. "Congrats to you both. I'm going to wander my way home now."

Just like that, Ellie got out of the bed and left the bedroom.

I sat there and stared at my wife.

"I swear, Em," I whispered.

“I know,” she said. “I didn’t know Ellie was going to do that.”

“I was having this dream and I woke up and it was Ellie in the bed...”

“What kind of dream?” Emily grinned.

“You were naked. Watching me play hockey. You were jumping up and down. Your tits... oh... Em...”

“Better than in real life?”

“I doubt anything is better than in real life,” I said.

“You tell me,” she said as she grabbed the bottom of her shirt and lifted it.

She flashed me and held her shirt up under her chin.

I tilted my head, grinning like an idiot, mesmerized by her body.

I reached for her, gently cupping her breasts.

My thumbs stroking the hard buds of her nipples.

My hands moved down to her sides and grabbed her.

I pulled her toward me and then tossed her down to the bed.

She gasped. Her face turned bright red.

My wife had a dirty fantasy...

She loved when I tossed her around the bed.

I climbed on top of her and opened my jeans.

It was time to bring all my dreams to life.

Being married to Emily.

Being in love with Emily.

And now enjoying a calm morning fucking Emily.

Chapter Forty-Four

EMILY



ON THE FIRST day of class I showed up to find a plate of cupcakes on my desk.

Along with a note.

From Gary.

Good luck this year. Don't leave any crumbs. Don't want any pests.

I smiled.

Then I got to work.

Maybe for now I was best suited to be in the classroom.

I wasn't sure.

A tiny voice in the back of my head wanted to know why I wasn't chosen for the promotion.

Then again, anything above the classroom level started to feel a little like politics and that was not something I was meant to deal with.

Candice? She was perfect for it.

Slimy and scummy, able to lie, backtrack and lie some more.

A sad life in all reality.

Chasing lie after lie to make it real and that was all you had to hold onto.

For me, I had my classroom and my students.

Plenty of familiar faces. Plenty of new faces.

Names to learn.

I thought of a silly way to break the ice with the kids by confessing to them that I had a fear of sprinkles.

Yes, sprinkles.

The topping.

I didn't like sprinkles because they were too small, too crunchy.

I didn't like the feeling of the crunch in my mouth or that they got stuck in my teeth.

Was I really afraid of sprinkles?

No.

But it made the kids giggle.

And I saw all the mischievous ones lit up with delight knowing they could come to class with sprinkles on their snacks to make Miss Emily get scared.

The first day of school tended to be the longest in a mental way.

I was used to being home.

Being spoiled by Rome.

This year had been the craziest for sure.

I caught myself during lulls in the day checking the time and comparing it to what I had been doing with Rome a week ago. A month ago.

I missed him.

I really missed him a lot.

The day finally wrapped up and I took the lead to make sure the end of the day procedures went without a hitch.

The first week or two of dismissal was very hectic.

Making sure we knew where everyone was supposed to be.

Some on the bus.

Some getting picked up in person.

Some getting picked up by car.

I shined in that high stress role for some reason.

Running around the hallways, using a walkie-talkie, ensuring the safety of all the kids.

There was a sense of relief and accomplishment when it was all said and done and the hallways were nice and quiet.

But on the first day of school?

Miss Emily needed to go home and have a drink.



I ARRIVED home to my husband in gym shorts and nothing else.

With a drink in his hand.

Meant for me.

I shut the door, locked it, dropped my bag, and raced toward him.

I had never seen such a sexy sight in all my life.

“Is this a regular thing?” I asked Rome. “Because if so, I’m going to love this year of teaching...”

“An incentive to get through the day,” he said as he grabbed me and swept me off my feet.

I tried to sip the drink.

Rome carried me to the bedroom.

I managed a couple sips, then gave up and handed the glass back to Rome.

Without breaking his stare, he put the glass on the nightstand.

I touched the top of his gym shorts, playfully pushing them down just a little.

I never felt a man so hard before.

Just always hard.

Muscles everywhere.

His cock always hard for me too...

Rome moved my hands away and he went to work on my clothes.

Gone were my relaxing jeans with a t-shirt or a hoodie.

I had to look presentable now.

It kind of felt like unwrapping a gift in a way.

A top shirt. An undershirt.

Pants that were appropriate for work.

Rome didn't hesitate for a second.

He stripped me down to my bra and panties.

A white bra.

Nothing special and sexy.

My panties were black.

Same... nothing special and sexy.

I felt his fingertips slide into the front of my panties and down.

As soon as he touched me... *there...* I grabbed for his arms and I melted.

I put my head back and I smiled.

Rome dipped his mouth down to my chest and kissed along the lines of my bra.

From one side of my chest to the other.

I hurried and reached behind and unhooked my bra.

My breasts screamed *Freedom!*

All the while Rome's tongue moved over my left breast with ease.

Engulfing me.

The tip of his tongue circling around my nipple.

His teeth then coming together for a playful tease. A playful tug.

Making me cry out and smile.

His fingers moved deeper between my legs, sliding against wet skin.

Teasing me some more.

Until I finally growled and grabbed for the front of his shorts.

“I need your cock,” I said. “Right now.”

“Good girl,” Rome whispered, his hot breath tickling my right breast.
“That’s what I wanted to hear.”

Rome picked me up with ease and threw me to the bed.

I hit and bounced, it felt like I could come already.

He pushed his shorts down and moved onto the bed, between my legs,
sinking down and in...

No hesitation.

No more foreplay.

Just his thick cock taking me.

He thrust hard. Fast.

He thrust deep.

So deep and sudden that my lower belly crunched up and I jumped up and
sank my teeth into his left shoulder, like a drunken vampire missing
someone’s neck.

I bit and squirmed and made some kind of weird noise and I started to
come.

Just like that.

Without a second to spare and zero warning.

That was the true power of Rome’s cock.

Part of me hated him for that.

Most of me loved him for it.

I clawed at his back and held on as he stayed perfectly deep inside me,
thrusting and teasing, tempting and moving with my body as I pulsed and
came over and over.

Then Rome made a quick move, rolled to his back and put me on top of
him.

I let out a gasping cry and suddenly I was staring down at him.

My hands on his chest.

My hips instinctively beginning to rock back and forth.

Now I was the one fucking him.
Pumping my hips like I had never done before.
I wanted him to finish fast, just like me.
He grabbed for my hips and I moved his hands away.
I took control now.
I put his hands above his head!
I lowered my chest down to his mouth and playfully wiggled my chest.
Making his tongue chase my nipples one at a time as they sway back and forth.

I then lowered my mouth to his and instead of kissing him, I groaned into his mouth.

Rome growled back at me. “Dangerous game, Em.”

“And I’m going to win,” I purred. “Come, Rome. I’m daring you to come.”

He curled his lip and thrust up.

Hard.

My body jolted forward.

I suddenly started to finish again and I launched myself off Rome.

I lifted up and then my body collapsed down.

Pressing his cock between our bodies.

Hard and wet...

My body throbbing and jumping.

Rome let out a groan and I gasped.

He grabbed my sides and held me there.

“Oh, fuck, Em,” he said. “Stay right there, sweetheart. I’m...”

He let out a grunt and I felt a warm spurt between our bodies.

I sucked in a breath and realized... *Rome was finishing right now.*

That sticky warmth forcing its way between our bodies.

And all I could do was just gently rock forward and back.

Humping his cock as he came.

It was so sudden and so intense and so hot...

Until I finally put my hands on the bed and lifted up a little so I could see.

I looked down and saw the mess between us.

“Oh, Em,” Rome growled. “What the fuck was that?”

“I have no clue. That was...”

Rome smiled. “You know, that was a little bit of a mistake.”

“What? How?”

“It’s supposed to go inside you. You know what I mean?”

I looked at Rome and grinned. “I know.”

He was talking about baby making again...

“So what are we going to do with it now?” Rome asked.

I reached down and swiped my finger into his warm orgasm.

“Not sure I can do much with it,” I said. “Maybe take a shower? Then do it again?”

Rome pulled my body down to his again.

Warm. Sticky. Sexy. Just everything.

We started to kiss.

A deep, passionate kiss.

I knew we weren’t going to make it to the shower before we started up again.

That was fine by me.

We could just shower later.

Chapter Forty-Five

ROME



EVERYONE WANTS AN UPDATE...

The sex was great.

The second time, yes, I finished inside Emily's beautiful body.

Then we took a shower together.

We ordered some food for dinner and just hung out and slept.

That was a while ago.

Now, hockey season was in full swing.

As was Emily's teaching gig.

She had a cool classroom and some cool kids too.

I showed up the one day just for the hell of it and more than a few kids knew who I was.

That gave me some hope for the sport and the team.

I hung around, colored some pictures and read a book to the kids.

Then I had to get to practice.

As far as the *SOLA Empire* was concerned...

We had the exact same amount of wins as losses.

Which wasn't a bad thing. At least not for us.

The start of the season we had a brutal schedule, playing some really good teams.

Then we got sent out on a seven-day east coast trip right away.

I hated being that far away from Emily.

I wanted to fly her out to New York City but she had work.

I never thought in my life I'd be married and have to deal with work schedules and missing someone and all that stuff.

Or that I'd end up in a hotel room, alone, my phone inches from my face, my hand wrapped around my cock, having sex with my phone while on video chat.

Listening to her moan and groan and watching her run her hand over her body... wearing nothing but one of my t-shirts... flirting by showing just a little bit of skin...

Yeah, I finished. Of course I finished.

The east coast road trip finished up with a losing record, but it felt good to fly back home.

On the flight across the country the guys and I sat together and talked about life.

It felt like the wild days of one-night stands and strip clubs were miles behind us.

Atlas missing Juniper Evelyn.

Everyone else missing their women.

I missed my wife.

My wife.

What a thing to have happen and be so real.

We landed back home and it felt strange to have everyone kind of go their separate ways.

Hazel surprised Atlas by showing up with Juniper Evelyn.

That little girl was mobile and running around like crazy.

Screaming for her *daddy* and Atlas picking her up with a smile that was contagious.

I actually caught myself swallowing hard a few times. Mostly thinking about Emily.

We hadn't talked much about that department in a while.

There were no talks about doctors, appointments, options.

We were just kind of living life and going with the flow of it all.

"Heading home to the wife?" Henry asked me.

"That's right. I can't wait to get her naked."

"No hugs and kisses?"

"Oh, there's plenty. I hug her ass. I kiss her chest. Then my tongue moves between her legs..."

"That's real nice to hear," Henry said.

"What about you? What do you do on these lulls now?"

"I just do my thing. Maybe I'll hit the beach. Hit the waves. Just decompress."

"No women?"

"I don't kiss and tell."

"You have secrets, Henry."

"I think you make up too much in your mind. See you tomorrow. Afternoon skate."

"Later," I called out as he walked away.

I had a car waiting for me.

The drive home took forever.

Emily and I hadn't decided how we wanted to deal with the living arrangements yet.

She had her condo. I had my house.

We split our time between both places.

She was at her condo now, which was my destination.

Everything about us and this marriage was twisted, backward and weird.

I didn't mind at all.

We'd figure it out when the time came.

When the car came to a stop, I grabbed my bag and hurried out of the car and ran to the condo building.

Each second felt like another hour away from my wife.

Until I was finally at the front door.

I unlocked the door and stepped inside.

"Em!" I called.

I took a few steps and looked around.

"Em?" I asked. "Damn, sweetheart. Where are you? I thought you'd be naked for me..."

The bedroom door finally opened and Emily appeared.

Wearing the same t-shirt from the night we fooled around on the phone.

I tossed my bag and took my shirt off.

I hurried toward her, opening my jeans too.

When I finally got my hands on her, I pulled her close and swept down for a kiss.

She clawed at my face and then scratched her hands down my body... to my hands...

She grabbed my wrists and pulled them from her hips.

To her stomach.

She placed my hands against her stomach and then stepped back.

"You better be naked in the next ten seconds, Em..."

"Shh," she said.

She grabbed my left hand and guided me into the bedroom.

She passed by the bed and began to walk toward the bathroom.

Okay, sweetheart. Shower time? You know how I feel about that!

Emily led the way to the bathroom and pointed at the bathroom sink.

She then covered her mouth and her eyes welled up with tears.

I saw the pregnancy test balanced on the edge of the sink.

My jaw dropped.

My heart raced.

I leaned forward, just enough to look at the pregnancy test.

It looked like a faint positive line...

I turned and looked at my wife.

She reached behind her and suddenly had another pregnancy test in her hand.

This one had the word right on it.

POSITIVE.

I touched the pregnancy test.

Emily let out a laugh and a cry at the same time.

I tossed the pregnancy test over my shoulder and I dropped down to my knees.

I lifted the t-shirt on Emily's body and stared at her stomach.

I kissed her belly.

Emily ran her hands through my hair.

"Em," I said.

"Yes," she said. "Definitely."

"You're... pregnant..."

"I'm pregnant, Rome."

I stood up and cupped her face in my hands.

"You know... I've never had sex with a pregnant woman before," I said.

"Only you could be so romantic during such a moment..."

"I'm just being honest, Em."

I kissed her.

Then she playfully bit my lip. "Hey, Rome."

"What?"

"Want to have sex with a pregnant woman?" Emily whispered with a smile.

I raised my right hand high into the air.

Then I picked up my wife - *my pregnant wife* - and I carried her to the bed.

And for the record, yes, I did have sex with a pregnant woman.

Preview Henry's book now!

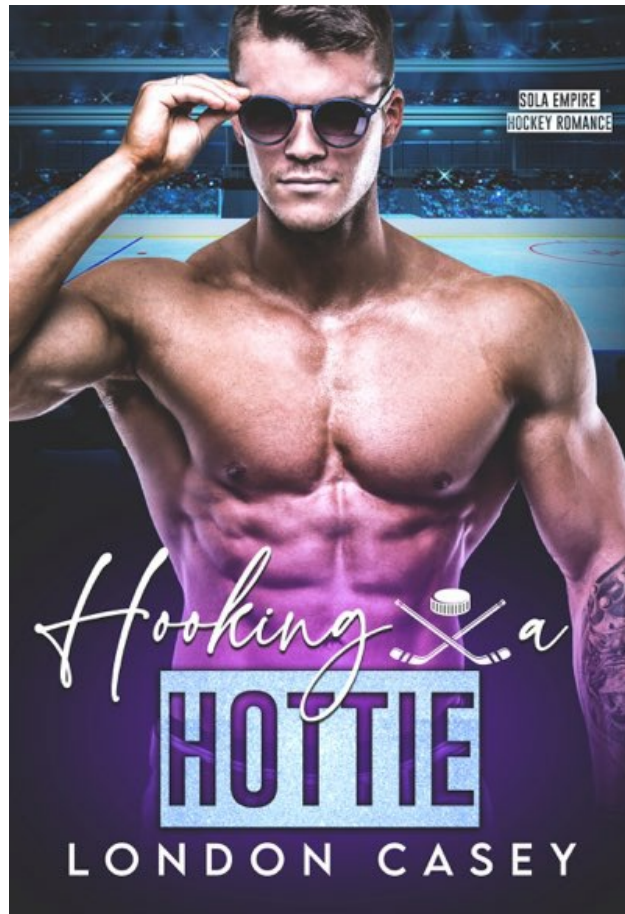
The SOLA EMPIRE series must now come to an end...

And this story is worth waiting for.

Everyone has secrets... including Henry.



*The man who shaped my life and kept me out of trouble has died.
And going back home means forcing all kinds of truths - including the fact
that I've been in love with that man's granddaughter from the day I met her
when she and I were just kids.
I never stopped loving her.
And, yeah, now she's married.
But that's not the biggest twist...*



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