

Lie No
MORE

A High School Bully Reverse Harem Romance

LISA CULLEN

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**A HIGH SCHOOL
BULLY, REVERSE
HAREM ROMANCE**

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DESCRIPTION

All I needed was a fresh start.

**And every new beginning starts with a healthy dose of
*revenge.***

When my ex cheated on me, I vowed to get back at him the only way I know how - by seducing his three best friends, the school bullies.

Xander is the handsome Ivy League bound rich boy. No girl can resist his cold demeanor, and his icy presence only draws me in closer.

Class clown **Bryce** may be funny, but he's also a star footballer bully every girl at the school covets for his gorgeous looks and intimidating physical size.

And then there's **Dane**, the school's bad boy whose razor-like snark makes his tongue almost as sharp as his chiseled cheekbones.

There's just one *growing* problem with my carefully constructed plan for vengeance...

A surprise gift from one of the men that will change my life...
forever.

JADE

“Everyone, please welcome our newest addition to Coldwater High, Jade Wells!”

There was an awkward cough in the silence, but otherwise, nothing. No red carpet rolled out, no round of applause swelled up to greet me in response to my new homeroom teacher’s enthusiastic introduction. The tepid response made sense, at least. A bomb going off might not have been enough to get the attention of a classroom full of seniors who had already mentally checked out of high school. But I still wished for a little more fanfare as I smiled out at my new classmates. This was the debut of my new identity, and *Jade* deserved more ceremony than *Hannah* would have ever wanted.

Eyes followed me as I made my way to an empty seat in the middle of the unfamiliar classroom. A few scathing looks, lots of clear skepticism as they all tried to figure out the new girl. *Let them try*, I thought with a smirk. *Jade Wells is a mystery even to me.*

The desk was squeaky as I took my seat, but at least it looked clean. I didn’t expect much from a public school after attending an upscale private school for the past three years. The ugly fluorescent lighting and dull linoleum floors, at least, were straight out of every teen drama TV series my parents thought I shouldn’t watch because I should have been studying.

And so were the guys sitting on either side of me. Both unfairly handsome, both with secret dark sides, and both

completely unaware that I was here to use them for revenge.

On my left was Bryce Fisher. He didn't know me, couldn't repeat my name even after the teacher had just announced it to the class. He was the predictable kind of handsome at first glance—tall, broad, with impressively chiseled bulky football-player muscles that threatened to escape his fitted T-shirt. His dark blond hair was a little wavy-shaggy, but just enough to give him the surfer guy hotness I associated with California, but without the cliché blue eyes to match. His eyes were warm brown, honey and cinnamon. They reminded me of the beautiful chestnut coat of my favorite horse, Sequoia, who I still looked forward to seeing at my grandfather's beautiful stables though I'd ridden her since childhood. It was almost comforting, except for how it was *Bryce* watching me.

Xander Townsend watched me from my right side, and by contrast, his eyes were the cold kind of blue I could practically feel sprinkle ice across my skin. More frigid lake than sunny sky. Where Bryce almost cast a shadow over me with his physical size, Xander's elegant frame was slender. His neat, short hair was light brown and showed a hint of a curl under the product that kept it in a pristine style, and his clothes weren't outwardly ostentatious, but their clean lines and obvious quality mirrored the kind of wealth I was used to from Worthington Academy. His best friend, Owen, never knew why Xander preferred to go to public school even though his family could afford to send him wherever they liked. But then again, my ex could be obtuse in a lot of ways.

I let that thought, the twinge of rage it sent through me, be my motivator as I turned toward Bryce.

"Do I have something on my face?" I asked innocently, batting my eyelashes to showcase the green of my irises, highlighted now by my dark eyeliner and dyed red hair. Even Owen had had a weakness for my eyes at one time, so I hoped this would be a good first step in my plan.

Bryce blinked, then let his gaze slide from my face all the way down my body. As he took in all five-foot-two of me, his expression didn't change, but I could feel heat on my skin that I knew wasn't just my reaction to being surveyed in this way.

He took his time pulling his eyes back up to mine, tracing my every curve with enjoyment he wasn't even trying to hide. When he'd finished his perusal, he gave a crooked, white-toothed grin. "Hmm. No, nothing on your face, new girl, but I'm happy to change that if you want."

The wink he threw in at the end shot straight through me, heating my blood all the way down to my lower belly. It was actually rude how hot he was.

But then his words sank in. The obvious innuendo. *Gross*. I'd met some cocky assholes at Worthington, but the prep school crowd at least kept their misogyny hidden under layers of snooty politeness. I heard Xander give a quiet scoff-laugh from my other side, and I whipped around to face him.

"Something funny?"

Xander followed Bryce's lead and looked me over, assessing everything from my black boots to the low neckline of my top. Again, heat prickled my skin despite his frigidity.

When he'd had his fill of checking me out, he raised one perfect eyebrow at me, the rest of his statuesque face unmoving. It annoyed me that he looked so good even when he was clearly looking down his nose at me. He was the rare, runway model kind of handsome that was hard to even capture in photos—I'd never seen the appeal of him in all of Owen's social media pictures, but in real life, I understood.

"You can put the claws away," he said with a bored tone, his voice as cold as his eyes. "I was laughing at my friend's complete lack of a filter. *You've* hardly made an impression."

Before I could think of a response, Xander was looking away from me, turning to the complicated math problems he had been working out in a notebook. It was such an easy dismissal, so effortlessly cool, that I wasn't sure what to do.

Bryce laughed then, too. I looked back at him.

"Don't worry, new girl. Xander's tough to crack, but I'm here if you ever want some fun."

"I'd rather eat glass," I shot back, and Bryce's smile didn't falter. He just took another moment to check out my cleavage

—which, okay, I *did* make an effort to highlight with my first-day outfit, hoping to channel femme fatale energy—and shrugged.

“Aw, come on. I’m a fun guy,” he said, grinning as he gestured to himself. “I can guarantee you’d feel different once I got my hands on you.”

I knew better than to dignify that with a response even before he burst out laughing at his own joke. As if the idea of touching me was laughable to someone of his social status. It stung a little, especially when he and Xander both ignored me for the rest of homeroom. But when I’d moved to this school and rebranded as Jade, I’d sworn to leave Hannah and her fragile ego behind just like I’d left Owen, my so-called-friends, and all of Worthington Academy.

Maybe Hannah would have been worried after facing down these obvious bullies, but Jade? She was ready for a challenge. For the revenge she came for, no matter how annoying Bryce and Xander might make it.

I remembered, then, that there was still a third target I had to meet, too. *Damn it*. He was supposed to be here.

My eyes scanned the classroom for another face I’d recognize from pictures, landing instead on an empty seat at the back of the room. Somehow, I knew that seat would usually be filled by my ex-boyfriend’s third and final friend. He couldn’t be as obnoxious as Xander and Bryce, could he?

I pulled the armor of Jade around me before I could think any cowardly, maybe-this-was-a-bad-idea, Hannah-like thoughts. Instead, I steeled my spine and thought to myself, *Let the games begin*.

JADE

I felt like a movie cliché as I walked into the cafeteria at lunch time, butterflies throwing a rave in my stomach. How could such a mundane room be so intimidating? Sure, there were swarms of students everywhere, strangers whom I hadn't spent the last three years getting to know, but if I could survive the snobbery of Worthington for three years, this place should be a breeze.

Yet there I was, lunch tray in hand as I stared out at a sea of unfamiliar faces and far too few empty chairs that looked appealing. I was considering embracing the sad *Mean Girls* moment and taking my lunch to the bathroom when a girl with a round face and glasses approached me.

"Do you need a place to sit?" the girl asked, her full lips parting in a smile that revealed bright white teeth, a lovely contrast to her deep skin tone. She seemed too genuine for me to assume this was some kind of trick, but maybe that was some of my old Hannah ways creeping in, always trusting people I shouldn't.

But no, that anxiety was the old me coming to ruin the party. I mentally shook it off and grinned at her. "That would be great."

"Yay! I'm always down to make a new friend. I'm Leah, by the way," she chattered as we found a table together.

"Jade," I told her, and it was starting to feel more natural to introduce myself that way already. "I just moved here."

“Oh! That explains why you looked so lost. Where did you move from?”

“Uh—just the next town over. My—uh, my parents had to move out of the country for my mom’s job, and I didn’t want to go, so I came to live here with my Aunt Lynette.” Shit. It wasn’t *too* far from the truth, but that sounded implausible. My high-powered business executive mother *had* been offered overseas jobs in the past and turned them down, more so she could be sure I was putting in enough effort at school for her liking than because she was worried about uprooting me. “My old school actually closed, too, so... yeah.”

Oh, how I wished that were true.

Leah didn’t question my shaky story, just softened her expression into one of sympathy. “That sounds hard. I bet you miss your parents. Is your aunt at least cool?”

“She is,” I said, and it was the first true thing I’d told her.

Really, I’d moved to get away from my ex after the catastrophic breakup that had derailed the end of my junior year. Owen Prescott, the picture of the perfect boyfriend until he betrayed me, was from this area, but since he’d stayed at my old school, I knew I had slim chances of running into him here. Even slimmer chances of anyone remembering Hannah Wells, Owen’s long-term girlfriend whom he rarely posted on social media and who never came with him to the raucous high school parties. I couldn’t see anyone here putting two and two together now that I was going by my middle name instead.

It had taken a lot of convincing to get my parents to let me move in with my mom’s sister for my last year of high school, but after they saw how wrecked I was because of Owen, they finally caved. Dad was a little concerned about what I’d learn by “running from my problems,” but Mom didn’t care where I went to school as long as I kept my grades up and stayed on track for getting a well-respected college degree. As for missing them... well, we’d never been that close emotionally. How could a little physical distance really hurt?

I was new to living a lie, though. It didn’t sit right in my gut, lying to this kind girl who was maybe my first friend,

especially as she shared fun, honest details about her own life with me. But I comforted myself with the reminder of what—who—brought me to this point. If Owen hadn't lied to me for months, neither of us would be in this situation. What Leah and my other classmates didn't know couldn't hurt them, at least not in the way Owen had hurt me.

My new almost-friend and I compared our class schedules and learned we had one class together later in the day, which filled me with relief. Having a friendly face was always helpful at a new school, even if I was trying not to feel anything but my enduring rage, my drive for vengeance. I was listening to Leah catch me up on all of the best Coldwater High drama when a dark figure caught my attention. He stood at the corner of my eye, and when I turned to look at him, I knew instantly that he was my third and final target. The dark, too-long hair falling into brooding dark eyes, the all-black clothes, the too-cool-for-school posture—it could be no one but the infamous Dane Schwartz.

“Oh, bad idea, sister.” Leah interrupted her story about some drama kids who got caught hooking up in the bathroom when she caught me eyeing Dane. “He’s gorgeous, of course, but you’ll only get your heart broken. There are *much* safer choices if you’re looking for a cute date to homecoming, trust.”

I felt my eyebrows raise in interest. “Who is he?” I asked as if I didn't already know. More lies.

“That’s Dane,” Leah told me, her voice low. We leaned into one another as she prepared to spill *all* of the tea, and my inner criminal mastermind was on the edge of her seat.

“Dane Schwartz. He’s like every bad boy your mama warned you about rolled up into one, save the motorcycle. He’s all trouble—lots of partying, ditching class, *way* worse stuff that I’m not cool enough to know about.” She laughed at herself, shrugged it off. “I do know he got held back a year at some point because he was failing *everything*, even though he’s apparently pretty smart. He just never shows up to class.”

That almost confirmed my theory about the empty seat in homeroom, then. So Dane would be a little harder to pin down. I made a mental note to myself and kept listening to Leah's AP-level gossip.

"Anyway, so he's nineteen, and we're honestly all surprised he hasn't dropped out since he acts like he's so above it all. I've even heard he's been in juvie, but I'm not sure whether that's just a rumor or not." Leah shrugged again, then her face turned sheepish. "The worst, though, is how much of a *player* he is. He's slept with like every senior on the cheerleading squad and the dance team *and* the color guard, from what I've heard. Some people say he seduced a good chunk of the old upperclassmen before they graduated, too."

"Woof," I said, and Leah laughed.

"Yeah, he's a real dog. We all know by now to stay away from him, but it took a *lot* of broken hearts for all of us to figure him out. Like, *Bust Your Windows Out Your Car* levels of drama. He and his two best friends are kind of an unholy trinity around here, so if you meet Xander and Bryce, I'd steer clear of them, too."

"Oh?" I asked, imbuing innocence into my curious tone like a goddamn pro. Maybe I was getting a hang of this living-a-lie thing, after all. I'd always been a quick study.

"Yeah. Xander Townsend is from some super rich family and you can really tell," Leah explained, rolling her eyes. "He's *so* full of himself. Doesn't get around like Dane, but that's just because he thinks he's too good for all of us peasants. He *oozes* snobbery out of his pores."

"Sounds gross." I laughed, and she laughed with me.

"Right? But he's gorgeous, too! In that country club kind of way. Like, I could totally see him tying a sweater around his shoulders, and I bet he'd look *yummy*." She sighed. "Bryce has this hot *Thor* kind of thing going on, with a touch of golden retriever boyfriend, but it's just the outside that's pretty. Like, I swear to God, he's the type to shove kids in lockers and give wedgies and stuff. How basic."

“I didn’t think that existed in real life,” I said, deadpan, and Leah snorted.

“Right? It’s so unfair how the three hottest guys in school are *all* total asshole bullies—and that Xander’s party this weekend is like mandatory attendance if you want to be anything but a social pariah.”

“Party?” I parroted back, my ears practically perking up like a dog being asked if it wanted a treat. That sounded like fertile ground for vengeance.

“Yeah! He always throws a back-to-school blowout rager. The three jerk-skateers will all be there, but if you want to tag along, you can hang with me. I’m a pro at avoiding them.” She smiled.

“Oh, you had me at rager,” I told her, smiling back with a touch of menace behind it. Leah let out another chuckle.

“Oh, I like you, Jade. You’re cool, and funny to boot.”

That took me by surprise for a second. When was the last time someone had complimented me on my sense of humor? Hell, when was the last time I’d been complimented on my personality *at all*? Owen certainly never did it, and neither did my so-called-friends back at Worthington. Instantly, I liked Leah even more than I already did. Even from knowing her for just this short time, I could tell she was kind, non-judgmental, *real*.

But before I could tell Leah that I liked her, too, a bit of a scene broke out in the cafeteria, grabbing my attention.

“Mr. Schwartz.” A stiff man in a stiffer suit—the assistant principal, I thought—called out loud enough that I could tell it wasn’t the first time he’d done it. My eyes snapped to Dane, who was honest-to-God *smoking* in the cafeteria. I watched the tendril of smoke slither out of his nostrils like some kind of dragon, and I never thought I had a thing for the bad boys before, but *God* was that sexy. I swore he met my gaze for a second, too. His dark eyes slid across the cafeteria, snagging on me for a second, before he finally looked the pissed-off authority figure in the eye.

“We got a problem, Hanson?” Dane drawled. Mr. Hanson’s face purpled.

“You know very well that there is *no* smoking in this building, young man. Put that cigarette out this instant. You’re too young to be ruining your health with such a disgusting habit, anyway.”

Dane plucked the cigarette out of his lips, but he just held it aloft, not moving to snuff it out. I could see the deliciously masculine sinews in his forearms, the hint of dark ink on the back of one wrist. *Of course* he had a tattoo.

While Mr. Hanson sputtered in rage, ramping up to some truly undignified yelling, Dane turned on his heavy boot’s heel and sidled away, smoke trailing after him. I watched as he exited from a side door, and I could see through the cafeteria windows that he’d gone outside to a green space with a bench and some wilting flowers. There was even a tiny sign that deemed it the smoking section. My old school never had such a thing, but that didn’t mean kids didn’t smoke anyway.

I realized, seeing Dane out there alone, that this was a good opportunity for me to put my plan into motion. I’d already acquainted myself with Bryce and Xander, but here was their elusive third musketeer, practically asking for me to approach him. I made an excuse to Leah, telling her I’d see her in class later before I dumped the last of my lunch tray and ducked outside.

I’d never attempted a seduction before, but that was the energy I was hoping to exude when I approached Dane in the garden. I swung my hips more than I normally would, walking slowly, crunching the early fall leaves under my shoes to announce my presence to him.

The look on his face when his eyes found their way to me again told me my devious plot was working, at least a little. Those brown irises, deep and mysterious, twinkled with interest as they scanned me from head to toe. His posture changed—not relaxing, exactly, as he already wore a devil-may-care attitude like a long beloved coat, but settling into the idea of my presence. He raised one thick, dark eyebrow at me,

his expression begging the question, *You sure you're in the right place?* The hard plane of his jaw set off his full lips as they smirked, and I sort of wanted to lick it, if I were honest with myself.

Of course, I had no intention of *actually* seducing Dane, much less Bryce or Xander. My evil plan was about making it *look* like I'd seduced all of Owen's longest and closest friends. It was about humiliation, retaliation for the hell Owen had given me, which didn't require me lowering myself to sleeping with guys I didn't even know, much less like.

But that didn't mean I couldn't have fun with the fantasy of Dane. I'd never been drawn to bad boys before, but there was a first time for everything.

"You got one of those to spare?" I asked him without thinking, nodding toward his dwindling cigarette. His lips twitched in the precursor to a laugh.

"You smoke?" he asked skeptically, and I enjoyed the rush of adrenaline that flooded through me as I stepped closer to him and turned my flirtation meter up to ten.

"No," I admitted, my voice low and sultry. "But you make it look so good, I figure I might as well try."

Dane snorted in derision, but I got a feeling that he appreciated my boldness. That is, until he opened his mouth.

"Nice try, new girl, but... pass." He stubbed out his cigarette and stomped the butt under his boot. "You've got a sweet body, to be honest, but I usually like someone who's a bit more of a challenge."

When his gaze swept over my body again, appraising me, there was an air of disinterest in it. I felt utterly dismissed, and when his words sank in, it turned to full on fury. Was he saying I was *easy*?

"Wow, a bad boy with a worse attitude. How predictable," I snapped.

"Not as bad as the obvious good girl trying and failing to go bad. Oh, please. Don't give me that look," he sneered. "I can see right through you. Let me guess. Some kind of prep

school princess trying to slum it with the regulars to piss off Daddy? Or are you just having an identity crisis?"

What the hell was his problem? The rage that surged through me was powerful enough to knock me over. Either that or I was going to explode. But that wasn't a good look for the first day of school, and I was desperate to keep control of the situation. Dane couldn't win. That would be like letting *Owen* win, and that wasn't an option.

Instead of losing complete control, I simply tossed my red hair over my shoulder and spat, "You're not as smart as you think you are. And I have a name, by the way. It's Jade."

"Dane," he responded, his tone bored. I blinked, surprised he even gave me his name after all of that. Mercurial was an understatement. He started to stride away from me, turning his back to the school entirely and heading toward the copse of trees at the edge of campus.

"Nice to meet you, too," I barked out, adding a quiet "asshole" just for my ears.

Great. We're three for three on the "total dick" count. All of my targets, the reasons I enrolled in this stupid school in the first place, were going to be absolutely insufferable to grow close to, even just enough to get my revenge against their friend. But it only took a second of remembering that first day when I found out about Owen's lies, the sting of that memory, to make my motivation stronger than ever.

There was no way in hell three high school bullies would be enough to stop me. I would get my revenge if it killed me, and for my first mission, I had my sights set on the biggest party of the year.

XANDER

I may have been the undisputed king of Coldwater High, but surveying my kingdom wasn't all it was cracked up to be. My house—my *parents'* house, really—was packed with teenage sardines, illicitly-acquired booze, and bad music playing too loudly from the state-of-the-art sound system my dad mainly used to watch live sports in high-def. Some people dreamed of this kind of high school glory. But after throwing youth-defining ragers for four years, I'd gotten pretty damn tired of it.

Even the girls, decked out and scantily clad, were *boring* to me. There was Marissa James standing by my mom's latest million-dollar art acquisition, dressed to kill in red velvet that hugged her womanly curves, but Bryce had slept with her months ago. Pass. Hallie Maynard was the dance team queen and was really showing off her skills in the crush of gyrating bodies, looking deliciously bendy with her deep brown skin bared to the world, but Dane had already broken her less-than-flexible heart, too. Then there were the girls who were too vapid or empty or otherwise imperfect to catch my discerning interest, and all in all, it painted a dull picture. Dozens of faces and names blended together into an unimpressive, loud cloud.

Weirdly enough, though, I almost felt like I was looking for someone. A shitty *Where's Waldo*, but instead of stripes and glasses, I couldn't shake the image of bright red hair—a color that *so* obviously came from a box.

Maybe Jade Wells had some secret penchant for witchcraft. By all accounts, she was nothing special, but every

day since she'd joined our school, I'd found it hard to fight my curiosity about her. Watching her hips sway in the hallway after homeroom, wondering what story had made her end up here, away from whatever school she'd attended from freshman to junior year. She was some kind of mystery, edged in a spicy sass that felt like a challenge. Most of the girls at Coldwater had given up on trying to challenge me ages ago.

Maybe it was just that she was fresh. The shiny new toy. And neither Bryce nor Dane had touched her yet, which helped.

I nodded along to the thumping beat of the Top 40 hit playing from the speakers as I made my way toward the kitchen. My red plastic cup was dangerously low on spiked punch, and I needed to be not sober to get through the rest of this godforsaken night. Some of Bryce's football buddies shouted after me as I passed them, so I threw them an easy smile and wave, playing the gracious royal. A few girls brushed against me, warm and sweaty, easy marks if I was looking to get laid tonight. But before the thought could even cross my mind, a familiar face popped up in my line of vision, grinning at me.

"Xan! Dude! Killer party." Owen Marcum, my oldest friend, slapped a hand against my shoulder blade in congratulation. His brown curls were frizzy, his cheeks red. I could smell the cheap vodka on his breath. *How pedestrian*, I couldn't help but think.

"Thanks, man. How ya been?" My bored tone wouldn't have registered with him even if he'd been sober.

"Oh, great, great. Living the dream." He smiled with all his teeth, but there was something sharp in it. "You heard Hannah moved?"

It took me a second to remember who Hannah even was. "Oh, that girl you were with forever?" I'd never met Owen's ex, but nothing I'd ever heard about her made me want to. Just another boring high school girl, led astray by the guy I'd met back in our upscale preschool days.

“Yeah, dude, my ex. She fully moved. Schools, everything. Becca thinks she’s in witness protection, but we know what the deal really is.” He laughed. I knew Becca was his newest feminine accessory, at least. He’d talked about her even before he’d broken things off with Hannah, bragging about his sneaky conquests like he wasn’t just being scummy but was pulling off some kind of mastermind plot. I was no saint, but that kind of treachery didn’t sit right with me. I erred on the side of harsh, brutal honesty rather than pretty lies. And my mom had cheated on my dad for years, which Owen knew had bothered me back when I still had the energy to care about things like having a normal, happy sitcom family. So it certainly didn’t bring Owen and me closer together. More and more, these days, I could feel us drifting apart.

Good riddance, I told the dull pang in my gut—nostalgia for a childhood friendship that didn’t exist anymore. We’d both changed. *You won’t need his dead weight at Harvard next year, anyway.*

“Probably has nothing to do with you. Honestly, a little weird that you’re still hung up on what she’s doing,” I told Owen, which struck his fragile ego. I watched his face sink, his expression turn to quicksilver fury, and I let out a strained, “Good to see you, bro,” before I took that opportunity to escape.

By the time I finally made it through the labyrinthine house to the huge chef’s kitchen that was only for show, I was fucking tired of playing host. I’d moved past high-fiving my friends and trying to entertain Bryce’s football buddies and barreled straight toward shoving people out of my way. I didn’t care how many grumbled “asshole” comments followed me, just so long as I made it to the liquor.

I poured myself something, took a long swig, and sighed. But then I noticed some ruckus streaming out of my mom’s prized formal dining room—the setting of many business dinners and not a single happy Thanksgiving. I swore under my breath, bringing my drink with me to investigate.

And who did I find but Jade Wells, concentrating hard enough on a game of beer pong to rival a NASA scientist. Her

brows, filled in a dark auburn color to go with her dye job, were scrunched together at the center of her forehead. I did not allow myself to think of it as *cute*.

“No, I’ve got it!” Jade snapped playfully at the guy at her left—Craig Washburn from the lacrosse team, who was clearly trying to “help” her aim in a blatant attempt to get close to her. She bent low, eyes scanning over the tops of the plastic cups. From the doorway, I let myself take in the seductive shadow between her breasts exposed by the low neckline of her swingy black dress. She had some smudgy dark makeup around her green eyes, too, which added to the effect. Damn, but she was hot. I told myself there was no harm in imagining those eyes staring up at me, Jade on her knees, her full lips around my cock. But I cut off the fantasy before my body could take it too far.

When she finally threw her ping pong ball and landed it directly in the middle cup, the elation that lit up Jade’s face sent a twinge of... something through me. I shook it off, stepping further into the room and starting a slow, condescending clap.

“Way to go, new girl. It’s Jane, right?”

Her eyes narrowed, and I smirked automatically.

“It’s *Jade*, but somehow, I get a feeling that you already knew that.”

“Same difference,” I said, deliberately riling her up. It worked like a charm. She squared her shoulders and propped her fists on her hips, emphasizing their enticing curves and jutting out her impressive chest at the same time. I didn’t even try to hide the way I took notice of that, trailing my eyes over her body with slow appreciation. I could practically see steam coming out of her ears.

“God, do you get joy out of being an insufferable dick?”

“Absolutely,” I answered. Jade started to turn on her heel and stride out of the dining room, parting the crowd of mostly horned-up guys she’d cluelessly drawn to her. But I stopped

her, raising my voice a little. “What’s the matter, Jade? Too chicken to finish your game with me here to watch?”

Her posture stiffened, and she whipped her hair as she spun and snapped her gaze back to me. “You don’t scare me, pretty boy.”

“So you admit I’m pretty,” I said, raising a challenging brow.

And wouldn’t you know it? I *was* having fun now, especially when Jade’s lips pressed into a thin, angry line, her small hands fisting at her sides, always so tense when I was around. I wondered idly what it’d be like to loosen her up in bed, what kind of noises she made in pleasure, whether she’d melt like butter in my hands.

“Sure,” she conceded, her voice a little tight. But she loosened up in preparation for her next attack, letting loose her cutting remark like an arrow. “But you’re pretty like a *Barbie* doll, or wall art from Target. Mass-produced, unoriginal, and frankly, uninspired.”

The hiss that broke out across the dining room was part laughter, part audible wince. The chucklers silenced when my eyes found them in the crowd, like plebeians remembering their place. When was the last time someone at Coldwater High had had the guts to say something like that to me? Hell, even people outside of school usually treated me like a prince, exalting my family’s wealth regardless of my attitude. And why was I more intrigued than angry about Jade’s audacity?

One thing was for sure. The new girl was shaking things up around here. I just wasn’t sure yet if it was in a good way or a very, very bad one.

JADE

I'd only had about a drink and a half, but I knew when I called out Xander in the middle of his own party that the alcohol must be getting to my head. I was still learning who my new identity was, but no way would even Jade be so rude to the host of a party without some liquid courage to fire her up.

Good Girl Hannah never used to drink, to be fair, so though I'd been going slow, I certainly could feel that warm buzz. I'd only ever tried stolen sips from my parents' fancy liquor cabinet during sleepovers, and my giggling friends and I would always spit the vile stuff out in the kitchen sink. Of course, there were plenty of parties at my old school where boatloads of underage drinking and other illicit activities took place. Owen was a regular fixture at parties back at Worthington *and* with the Coldwater crew, but he never wanted to drag me along. At the time, I thought he was looking out for me by always insisting I wouldn't enjoy it, that it just wasn't my scene. Now I knew better.

It was a lot easier for him to pick up other girls without his girlfriend there to cramp his style.

"Good to know," Xander told me after what felt like a year of bated breath, "that you've got some wit to go with that body, at least."

I felt my cheeks burn red, but it wasn't only from embarrassment. The way Xander Townsend looked at me was so cold and calculated that at first glance, someone less

focused on his every move—for revenge purposes, of course—might have mistaken it for complete apathy. But beneath the ice blue was a hint of the blue heat at the center of a flame. It was almost wolfishly hungry, shrouded behind a mask of pure control.

“If you’re gonna say stuff like that, at least get me a drink first,” I half purred. Leah, who I saw at the edge of the room watching this little scene, let out a scandalized “ooo” to egg me on. It made me smirk even as a really, really awful—but no less tempting for it—idea fell into my head. “In fact, get yourself one, too. How about a drink-off, pretty boy?”

“Oh, no. Something more interesting. A game, perhaps?”

Oh, jeez. No way this could be leading anywhere good. But sheer stubbornness, an unwillingness to let him win, had me falling for the bait and asking, “What sort of game?”

He strode toward me, slowly and deliberately. I didn’t back away as he came within a foot of me, close enough that I could see the dark blue ring around the edge of his chilly blue irises. Damn it, he *was* pretty, though.

“I want to figure you out, new girl,” Xander almost purred. “A good old-fashioned Truth or Dare could be fun. But be warned, I won’t go easy on you just because you’re pocket-sized.”

I scoffed. “What are we, twelve? *No* truth or dare. Never have I ever,” I countered, thinking of it as the words came out of my mouth. “We drink for everything we’ve done.”

Xander’s lips stretched into a smirk that was the closest thing to a smile he could probably manage.

“That could work. Though I can almost guarantee my truths will be more interesting, so it feels like you’re getting the better side of this deal.” He shrugged. “Maybe I’m feeling generous.”

I rolled my eyes hard enough that I was surprised they didn’t break loose from my head and roll away onto the floor. “I don’t know you at all, Xander Townsend, but I doubt

anyone would describe you as *generous*. I'd bet money on it—which is a language you can understand, at least.”

The crowd of classmates that had gathered around us for this display let out a scattering of titters, amusement I'd empowered them to show despite their clear fear and respect for Xander. He shot a look around the room that could kill, and the laughter died.

A truly unhinged thought struck me as I watched him intimidate his peers with only a glance. He may be a weapons-grade asshole, but at least I could see no artifice in it. In so many ways, Xander could have been exactly like Owen. They grew up with similar silver spoons and pretty faces that let them get away with almost anything, near-identical senses of entitlement. But where Owen had lured me in initially with a sweetness I'd been too naive to see through, Xander had something genuine in his icy exterior. This wasn't an act or some kind of defense mechanism, and he didn't bother trying to be someone he wasn't to attract the love and adoration Owen hadn't been able to live without. Xander was self-sufficient, content to be feared.

Christ, if I was starting to admire his *honesty*, maybe Owen had done more damage to my brain than I thought.

“You said it yourself,” Xander's low tone piped in, his gaze locked on mine in a clear intimidation tactic. I wouldn't give in. “You don't know me. So let's get to know each other, shall we?”

With a nonchalant wave of his hand, all of Xander's lackeys rushed to set up the game for us, clearing away the remnants of beer pong and setting up shots before I could even object. Thinking quickly, I grabbed a bottle of some kind of fruity concoction that wasn't nearly as alcoholic as the straight liquor they'd poured for us. Just because I was dumb and tipsy enough to challenge Xander to a drinking game, even though he seemed fully sober and was about a foot taller than me, didn't mean I was dumb enough to get myself sick off vodka shots.

“Ladies first,” Xander said, and I shook my head.

“You’re so curious about me, *you* go first.”

“Fair enough.” He pondered for a long moment, then said, “Never have I ever mysteriously moved to a different school before my senior year.”

Damn it. I should have seen that coming. As our onlookers giggled, I took a quick swig from the bottle in my hands, then fired back, “Never have I ever hooked up with someone and then didn’t text them ever again.”

It was a shot in the dark, but it felt like a safe bet. Plus, I had a little insider info from Owen, who had always seemed to envy the carefree singleness of his best friend while we were dating. Xander raised an eyebrow, reached for a shot on the table, and threw it back, ignoring the drink in his other hand. Was he upping the ante in response to my first move or just trying to prove some kind of manliness by handling more liquor? Whatever. I wouldn’t let him rattle me either way.

“Never have I ever put out for a guy who couldn’t find the clitoris,” Xander said without missing a beat, and I felt my whole face flush bright red. Owen and I had some good times, but sexually, he hadn’t been terribly concerned with my pleasure. When I lost my virginity to him, he put on his kind and caring façade, checking in to make sure nothing hurt and that I was still on board to do this. But every time we slept together from that point on, it was like he’d already gotten what he wanted, so he didn’t have to try anymore.

There was some shame under my skin as I lifted my drink to my lips, but I squared my shoulders anyway and took a sip. I wasn’t at all ashamed of having sex with someone who, at the time, had cared for me. Despite the too-traditional values my parents tried to impose on me, I didn’t see the point in feeling shame about sex at all. My only regret was that I didn’t know who Owen really was until so much later—that I’d let myself be so vulnerable with someone who didn’t care about my pleasure in the slightest.

“A shame,” Xander commented idly, staring into my eyes like he was looking for something important. “A body like that should only ever be worshiped.”

The crowd around us seemed to take a collective breath. I could have sworn some of the girl spectators moved closer, their heart eyes apparent even in the dim party lighting. Even as the sexual energy of his statement pulsed through my body, settling between my legs, I didn't cede any ground to him. "Oh, fuck off."

He looked like he wanted to grin, but I snapped, "Never have I ever masturbated to the thought of one of my friend's girlfriends."

Xander's dry laugh felt like a slap. He gestured with his cup, indicating he wouldn't be drinking from it. Damn it. I was struggling to land perfect blows, to uncover the secrets I hoped to find. I was scrambling to think of what my next statement could be when he said, "One thing you should know about me, Jade, is that I *always* get what I want. I've never had to pine for something out of reach."

I swallowed hard and waited for his next move in our game, but then Bryce stepped up beside his friend, clapping him on the back in a bro-ish sign of camaraderie. "What's going on here, Xan? Playing with the new toy?"

The only thing that could really break the sexual tension between Xander and me, it seemed, was a third party getting involved. I glared at Bryce, whose easy grin pissed me off. I was no one's toy—not since I'd stopped being Owen's.

"The new girl challenged me to a drink-off," Xander told Bryce without looking away from me. His eyes slid down to my chest, lingered. "Speaking of, it's my turn, isn't it? So..." He looked at me with dark intentions. "Ah, I've got it. Never have I ever choked on some mediocre dick."

Bryce choked on his own drink as he watched me not move toward mine. I gave Xander a sweet smile and a shrug, playing innocent.

"Funny thing, *Xan*. I don't really have a gag reflex."

I could practically hear Xander's teeth grinding from the way he tensed his annoyingly perfect, Greek-statue jaw. Bryce's laughter, an uproarious, gleeful thing, soared over the

scandalized chatter from the peanut gallery. He meandered across the room, coming from Xander's side to mine in long, lazy steps. God, he was enormous when he stood next to me, easily six-foot-four and built like a stupidly-attractive mountain. He surprised me by smiling and going to clap a friendly hand on my back the way he'd done with Xander, his warm palm meeting the bare skin above my dress.

“Okay, new girl,” Bryce said with genuine admiration. “It’s kinda hot to see you’ve got fire in you. I’m on your team.”

It was a twisted sort of world I was living in where Bryce Fisher came off as pleasant and fun. A little crass, sure, but this was the first time I’d perceived him as joking and friendly rather than an intentional bully.

“Traitor,” Xander bit out, and as Bryce and I laughed together like allies, if not friends, the game went on. Just feeling the quiet anger coming off Xander in waves from across the way, I sort of felt like I’d already won.

BRYCE

Watching Jade destroy Xander during Never Have I Ever was my new favorite activity. Fun was probably my biggest motivator at all times, especially at Xander's parties, and goddamn, this girl was proving to be more fun than I expected. Tonight, it was my mission to get my two best friends to have fun for once, too—and Jade Wells was succeeding more than I was. How thoughtful of her to help me out without my having to ask.

“Never have I ever finished in two minutes or less,” Jade sneered, and the cackle I let out while Xander begrudgingly drank was one of pure joy. Maybe this new girl with all of her spice was exactly what the doctor ordered.

It was hard being the life of the party with two killjoy best friends. Dane and Xander had been dragging their mopey asses around for too long. While I danced and flirted and actually had a good time, Dane liked to lurk in dark corners and people-watch, wearing an expression that said he was only here because he'd been forced to be. Xander was always going on about how bored he was, sticking his nose in the air like he was above it all. But my mom taught me if you were bored, you were boring—which was why I always tried to be anything but. Xan didn't like hearing that, though. He could be sensitive like a little girl sometimes. He'd never have survived growing up with my ruthless older brothers.

People thought *I* was a bully, but they hadn't grown up with Devin and Mitch. Sure, maybe sometimes I took jokes too far, but my real friends knew that I wasn't *really* a bully.

Even if they didn't know how my older brothers had taunted me into an emotional corner for all my life, how I'd vowed to never be the victim again.

I checked back into the game, shaking that off like a wet dog. *Life of the party, Bryce.*

“Damn, Xan,” I said, ignoring how Xander's eyes narrowed like he wanted to kill me. “The new girl is ruining your perfect reputation and she's only been here a week. Impressive.”

Jade grinned smugly, even high-fiving me. It was so interesting how she could easily flip from spicy to sweet—and how badly I wanted a taste.

I'd been looking for Dane when I stumbled upon Xander and Jade locked in battle, and the scene I found was too entertaining to leave behind. Jade's red hair was wild, full and styled curly to go with her sexy, form-fitting party dress. The energy coming off her in waves was pure power, and for a minute, I wanted to know how she'd unleash that power in bed. And actually, I wouldn't even brush that thought off so easily. I'd never been turned down before, so maybe Jade would let me show her a good time soon. No harm in having a little fun.

Suddenly, though, I saw Jade stiffen beside me. Xander was mid-statement for Never Have I Ever, but she didn't seem to hear what he said, staring into the middle distance with her wide, acid green eyes. Before I could even form a decent teasing joke, she was gone in a puff of smoke, cutting through the crowds with adrenaline-laced speed.

“What the hell?” Xander exclaimed, spinning around to watch her as she ducked out of the room, heading toward the back door. He had his pissed-off, somebody-didn't-do-what-I-want face on, which made his lips press into a thin line. I wasn't thrilled about my new favorite plaything running off, either, but I moved to Xander's side as the other spectators dispersed.

“Looks like she saw a ghost,” I mused aloud, and I was surprised by the level of worry I could hear in my own voice.

Why should I worry about some girl I didn't know for shit? And worse, why did that worry make some sort of protective feeling rise up in my chest, like I wanted to punch whatever had scared her off?

"Typical," Xander scoffed. He concealed his own reaction to Jade Wells under the haughtiness he wore like armor. "Probably knew she was in over her head with me."

"Not everything's about you, dude," I told him without thinking. Xander's cutting look was usually reserved for people below our link on the social food chain, and it made me squirm a little to be faced with it. But I'd stared down linebackers twice my size on the football field, so I didn't let it really spook me. Xander was my friend. I'd known him since he was a kid with rainbow bands in his braces because he couldn't choose just one favorite color.

He sighed. "No, but it seems like everything sort of *is* about Jade these days. I don't like it."

"I don't know, I think it's kinda fun. She's... feisty."

"In need of some discipline, maybe," Xander mused, and I was struck with an image of Jade on her knees in supplication. My cock stirred, but I willed it to calm down.

Xander looked like he was picturing the same thing, though. Tension in his jaw. A dazed look in his eyes that seemed to follow where she'd run off. Was he just as obsessed with this new girl as I was? And what did that mean for our friendship? Christ, what did that mean for either of us that we were sort of obsessed with the same girl for the first time? I'd only ever been interested in pussy in the past, and now I was feeling protective about Jade Wells, almost dejected when she left. It was simpler to just be interested in a girl for sex.

But that was all this was too, right? I hardly knew Jade Wells well enough to care about the *heart* under her incredible tits. Xander watched me as I thought this out, his blue eyes seeming to scan straight through me. He was too damn smart for his own good.

“I think I know exactly what would help get her feisty attitude under control,” he said slowly, raising an eyebrow. His look said *You think it should be you?*

And okay, yeah, I did think it should be me. Xander had gotten everything he’d ever wanted, never had to compete for shit. The smart, rich, confident one of the three of us, made to look better because Dane and I stood beside him, less rich, less smart, and less self-assured.

But no. I’d grown out of my insecurities, left them behind when I grew six inches in a summer, got strong, got tough. Those worries that I wasn’t good enough belonged with the bedraggled younger brother who cowered in the face of Devin and Mitch’s so-called humor. I was an athlete, and I’d grown up in my ruthlessly competitive family to boot—if I wanted her, I could get *any* girl.

I smiled at Xander, letting him see my implied reply in my eyes before I told him, “Oh, trust me. I’ve got some ideas.”

JADE

The only thought in my mind as I practically sprinted through Xander's parents' house was *He can't see me here*. It started the second I glimpsed Owen Prescott's stupid smug face through the dining room archway. There he was in the living room, chatting flirtatiously with some girl who *wasn't* his current girlfriend. Fucking typical.

Autopilot was carrying me outside the next thing I knew. It was a little chilly in the Townsends' backyard, but that didn't stop the load of kids from Coldwater living up to their school name by daring each other to get in the pool. Their loud laughter and shrieks of surprise as they got in followed me as I put more distance between my ex and the new me.

The pool house seemed like a safe hiding spot. As I reached it, I found the door was unlocked, though there were no lights on inside. I breathed my first full, deep breath once I'd slipped inside and shut the door behind me.

But after my breath started to calm with my still-racing heart, I realized there was some noise coming from my left. Breathy noises that weren't my own, a repetitive slapping sound. A deep, resonant moan.

Oh, good Lord. Was that what I thought it was?

For some stupid reason, my feet carried me toward the sounds. I should be heading in the opposite direction, and I knew that even as I moved slowly, silently into the dark pool house. There was a door open just a crack on the far end of the room, and the closer I got, the clearer it became that there was

someone having sex here. Great sex, from the sound of it. Just as the thought occurred to me, I heard a feminine moan that got cut off by a gasp, a breathless “*Fuck, Dane!*”

Wait. Did I hear that right? My feet froze in place, but I leaned forward, craning my neck a little to peer through the gap in the door. No way I was stumbling into Dane Schwartz’s sexual conquest of the night. I must have heard wrong—any number of names could sound like Dane.

I could tell just from the back of his head, though, that I hadn’t misheard the girl’s cry of ecstasy at all. Artfully-falling dark hair, dark clothes, broad shoulders. Smooth, well-defined arms gripping a pair of spread legs, holding the knees around his hips as he thrust. When he let out a low “Fuck,” there was no mistaking him.

Because his back was to me and his partner was presumably lying back across the made bed, I couldn’t see much, but I could see that Dane’s pants were undone and drooped low, the pale roundness of his ass exposed. My eyes were drawn to the flexing muscles there, strong and sculpted, utterly bite-able. My pulse quickened, my nipples peaked under the thin material of my slinky dress. It was hard not to let out a moan myself.

I knew it was wrong to watch. Hell, it was wrong that I hadn’t turned around and faced my stupid fears the second I suspected what I’d walked into. But the pure eroticism of the scene before me was too mesmerizing to look away from. Dane fucked like... well, like someone older, more experienced than my one and only partner had been. The movement of his hips was so fluid, so enticing that I suddenly felt my inner muscles clench as if I were the one he was pushing into. Even crazier was the way that, for a nonsensical second, I wished that were true.

You hate him, I reminded myself, even as I saw his fingers dig into the flesh of the girl’s thigh with a sexy possession that would leave a mark. His other hand moved from her leg, disappearing in front of him. The high sound she made told me he’d found a way to add to her pleasure, and I wanted to know what he’d done. Pinched her nipple? Rubbed her clit in expert

circles? I could feel the molten desire rushing between my legs, and I squirmed.

A mistake, as it turned out. This whole stupid night had been a mistake, but that tiny movement, an attempt to relieve some of the pulsing need in my body as I participated in my first ever act of voyeurism, was the biggest misstep by far. A floorboard creaked loudly, almost comical, like an exaggerated movie sound effect. Unfortunately, my fight or flight response was awful. I only froze as Dane's head whipped around, his dark eyes locking with mine.

All at once, the scene fell apart. Dane and his latest conquest separated, the girl rushing to cover herself. She swore up a storm as she scurried out of the room on shaky legs, pushing past me as she fled the pool house.

That was my cue to leave, too. I turned, forcing my frozen feet to move, but before I could get more than a couple of steps away, Dane was grabbing my wrist, stopping me. I whirled back toward him, my face aflame with mortification, but I tried to channel it into indignation.

"Get your hands off me," I snapped, and Dane let out a cruel bark of a laugh.

"Oh, that's fucking precious after what you just did," he sneered. His grip on my wrist didn't loosen. "You got a thing for watching people fuck, new girl? Can't get dick on your own so you have to live vicariously?"

"Fuck you," I spat.

"You'd like that, wouldn't you?" Dane said, his eyes dragging over my body with a look that held just as much lust as it did disgust. "Not a chance. I can get as much pussy as I want without having to stoop to someone so desperate."

He pulled me closer to him, trapping me against his front with a strong arm around my waist, his dick pressing hard into my stomach through his unbuttoned jeans. Arousal swept over me in a wave, and I swallowed hard to hold it back, glaring up at him with all the rage I could muster.

"Let me go," I said, even as my body said *pull me closer*.

“I’m not sure you’ve learned your lesson yet,” he growled against my ear, and an image fell into my head that only amplified the heat under my skin—an angry Dane bending me over his knee, spanking me, leaving angry red handprints on my flesh like he left bruises on that girl he was fucking. God, why was that so hot? It only made me want to rile him up more in hopes that he’d act out my fantasy. *Revenge, Jade. Remember why you’re here.*

But tension was radiating between the two of us. My breath was labored as if he’d touched me someplace more intimate, and Dane’s expression was full of heat, his dark eyes seductive.

“You want me, don’t you, Jade?” His voice was sultry and low in my ear, his breath tickling the stray curls and making me shiver. Almost involuntarily, I pressed myself closer to him. It was hard to hold back a moan when Dane pressed his cock against me and said, “You want to finish what she started, baby?”

This time, I did moan. The gentle tone of his voice, the way his grip on me tightened—it was too much. I didn’t have the upper hand like I wanted anymore, and I wasn’t sure I’d had it in the first place.

There was only one way to wrest control from his strong, sexy hands. With a challenge in my eyes, I stared up at Dane for a long, tense second before I grabbed the back of his neck and pulled him down to taste his mouth with my own.

DANE

Jade's kiss was wild, near-violent, a clash of lips and tongues and a cacophony of uneven breathing that we created together. It was automatic how I pulled her against me, palming her ass with a satisfaction that shot straight to my groin. I'm not sure what I would have expected from the new girl, but the raw passion she showed with no self-consciousness didn't fit with the image of her I had in my head—a good girl trying to be interesting for the sake of other peoples' opinions. This felt more authentic than her dyed hair or the glimpses of a false backbone she showed when she'd tried to verbally spar with me.

Her hands were frantic, one fisting in my hair while the other scratched at my back as if hoping to rip my shirt off. I broke away from her for just a second to pull the shirt over my head, taking advantage of the moment to shove her dress down her body until it pooled at her feet. She'd gone without a bra, and the full, round breasts she'd been hiding were better than I'd even expected—lush, firm flesh topped with rosy nipples I wanted in my mouth. I swept my eyes hungrily over the rest of her, the soft middle and flared hips, the hint of wetness I could spot at the front of her lace-edged panties. Were they white and virginal like I'd expected from her before, or some pale blue or lilac surprise? All I knew was I wanted to tear them off with my teeth.

When I kissed her again, taking charge, she almost leapt into my arms, wrapping her legs around my waist. I walked us over to the bed, turning to sit on it so she was straddling me.

Her arms snaked around my shoulders, tugging lightly at the ends of my hair. I was already hard when Jade showed up, a promise unfulfilled, though the girl I'd been with was completely forgotten now. She was just another in a long line of distractions. But now I was solid as steel, turned on by the thought of Jade watching me fuck someone else and the fury that still came off both of us in waves. When Jade rocked her hips against me, I felt my erection pressing up into her tantalizing panties through my boxer briefs. Only two thin layers of material kept me from what I knew would be heaven.

She seemed just as enticed by that prospect. Her small hand inched down, tried to grab at my cock, but I stopped her by grabbing her wrist again.

“Only good girls get my cock,” I told her, playing into this game. “And you haven't been very good tonight.”

Her eyes filled with fire, but she dropped her hand away, gyrating her hips instead so I could feel some hint of what I was missing not being inside her. Fuck, maybe I should just do it. Just let myself be buried in her. Chase the release that the other girl hadn't had the chance to give me.

Jade didn't deserve that, though. Giving her the ecstasy of my filling her up would be a reward for her little peep show, and I couldn't allow that, even if I wanted it more than I thought possible. Still, the need in her voice when I dragged my lips down her throat and she breathed my name in my ear...I couldn't help myself. I needed to hear what she sounded like when she came apart, needed her to know the power I could wield over her body, if only to combat how powerless I felt under her touch.

As I nipped at the sensitive skin where her neck met her shoulder, I gripped her ass tightly in my hands, dragging her covered folds against me. Her shaky gasp sounded like she was halfway to an orgasm already. So needy, and I'd barely touched her. To up the ante, I moved to press my face between her breasts, dragging my tongue from the valley between them all the way to her right nipple, which I circled and sucked. God, the salty taste of her skin, the warmth of her—it had me thrusting up into her, willing the clothes between us to

disappear. She whimpered when I pulled her nipple further into my mouth, lightly scraping it with my teeth. I took my time lavishing her breast with my heated attention, then slowly moved to the other as I brought my right hand between her thighs.

I didn't bother with teasing, not tracing her dampness from the outside or showing any tenderness in my exploration. I just shoved the fabric to the side and delved into her wet heat with my fingers, finding her swollen clit instantly and brushing past it just to torture her. Jade swore, throwing her head back so the ends of her hair swayed above my knees. I relinquished her breast with a loud smack, then yanked her face back to mine as I thrust a finger inside her. I kissed her hard so I could taste her cry of pleasure.

Jade rode my hand in fast, jerky motions. She wasn't worried about anything anymore but chasing her own release. I filled her tight pussy with a second finger, relishing how firmly she clenched around me, how she bit my lower lip with a mix of gratitude and frustration. I smiled against her mouth as I allowed my thumb to slowly press into her clit.

With a few quick, hard circles of my thumb against her sensitive nerves, the matching thrusts of my fingers stretching her to her limit, it finally happened. Jade's inner walls clenched, spasmed, and she let out a keening cry. She gripped my shoulders for purchase as she rode out her pleasure, my careful ministrations prolonging it for my own enjoyment as much as hers. Christ, the heave of her breasts in the moonlight as she tried to catch her breath was almost enough to make me finish in my pants. But I held it together until she stilled, extracting my fingers slowly from her panties when her heart rate finally settled to some kind of normal. She watched me with wide eyes as I put my fingers into my mouth and sucked her juices off them, pulling them out clean with a satisfying pop. Delicious.

That look on her face was doing something to me. It was soft, almost frightened like a small animal, and it caused a twinge in my chest. Or maybe it was just the rawness of this moment, the intimacy of her taste still on my tongue somehow

getting to my brain. I almost wanted to pull her against me, hold her tight, breathe in the scent of her hair—but that would be stupid, not to mention completely antithetical to everything I stood for. She may be pretty when she comes, but this girl was still some poser nothing who wasn't worth the attention I'd already shown her. She was no different from the other privileged, stupid kids at our school.

I had to remind myself of that a few times before I could make myself say, "Right. That's finished. Now, new girl, would you be a doll and get our friend Gina to come back and finish me off?"

Jade flinched away from me like she'd been slapped. She almost fell off my lap in her attempt to get away from me as quickly as possible, scurrying back to the door where her dress had been abandoned.

"You're such an asshole," she bit out. I watched her shamelessly as she shimmied back into her tight dress.

"I'm sorry, did you want to stay and watch some more?" I sneered, ignoring the pang of guilt in my chest when I saw how her eyes glistened with unshed tears. *Not your problem, Schwartz.* "I don't think Gina's into having an audience, so I'm pretty sure another show is out of the question. Unless you wanted to suck my dick yourself instead."

The furious scoff she let out was almost a growl. She swiped a hand over her eyes, smudging her makeup but eliminating the moisture before it could spill over. Her tone was pure ice when she said, "You can suck your own dick, fuckwad. Or get one of your stupid fucking friends to do it for you."

She stormed out of the room and then the pool house, leaving me hard and alone. When the door slammed behind her, I was in the empty dark, faced with some new feeling I'd never felt before. Like a *sorry* that wanted to come out, but I'd never been one to apologize. The sting of regret at the back of my throat bubbled up like acid, a rush of remorse for treating her the way I'd always treated everyone but my two closest

friends. What the hell was happening to me, and how was it Jade Wells's fault?

JADE

After such an eventful start to my weekend, there was no hope for my getting anything done. I was haunted by daydreams and memories of Dane's mouth on mine, his hand in my panties, asserting his possession in such a sexy way, it even dulled the anger he ignited in me. And there were actual dreams, too—erotic scenarios playing out with vivid images of Dane's ass, my hips and thighs in his hands, his tousled hair in mine.

Worse, even, was how Dane wasn't alone in the fantasies my subconscious was obsessing about. I dreamed of Xander's blue eyes and Bryce's broad shoulders, too, and all of it made me wake up sweaty and flustered, in need of release I had to give to myself—with the help of the vibrator I'd secretly ordered online back when Owen and I were still together.

Then, I'd sometimes fuck myself with the purple vibrating phallus after I left Owen's place. He always wanted to have sex after that first time, but I always went home unsatisfied, with need still throbbing between my legs. Owen was selfish in a lot of ways, but his lack of care for my pleasure was something I'd been able to overlook then, inexperienced as I was. Now, my vibrator was a sad substitute for the orgasm Dane had given me, but it would have to do.

He hadn't even pretended to care about me in the moment or after, making it clear that the pleasure he gave me wasn't about anything but control. But something about that was so hot, I couldn't breathe. And then there was the heated game of Never Have I Ever that amplified my curiosity about Xander,

and Bryce's easy charm as he briefly became an ally to me, taking my side against his friend... it was all so confusing.

I wasn't supposed to be *thinking* about hooking up with Owen's friends for real, much less actually letting one of them touch me. I was supposed to tease them and taunt Owen with social media posts, spread rumors about how easily I'd seduced his friends, how quickly I'd moved on from him. I definitely wasn't supposed to be letting Dane give me an orgasm, much less dreaming of having many more moments of ecstasy with all three of the stupid musketeers.

God, I was *not* looking forward to seeing them all at school again. How was I supposed to show my face in homeroom, the cafeteria, the fluorescent-lit hallways? If I thought I could escape the unholy trinity by skipping first period for the rest of the year, I would, but Xander was in my AP physics class, Bryce had Spanish with me, and our shared English class was just about the only thing Dane actually showed up for on a daily basis. I couldn't tank my entire GPA just to avoid some drama. Not if I wanted to appease my parents and get into a good college.

Monday came with the same quickness it always did, but I approached it with an added layer of dread. Luckily, when I got to homeroom, none of the guys were there yet. I took a seat—and my first full breath since the day started—in an empty cluster of desks toward the back of the room, but not far enough back that I'd be inevitably sitting by Dane if he decided to actually show up today just to torment me. I pulled out my mostly-finished calculus homework, double checking that I showed all of my work, when someone claimed the seat next to me.

I looked up to see Xander's prim and proper form filling the adjacent chair. He had a routine, always sitting in the same spot toward the front of the room, but that seat was left vacant. Which meant he'd chosen to sit *beside me* this time... on purpose.

"Lose your way to your usual seat, Xander?" I asked him pointedly, but the nerve of him—he didn't even look at me.

Like he hadn't heard what I said even though I spoke at a perfectly audible volume and I was *right next to him*.

I bristled. "I hope you're not under the impression that we're friends now."

Silence. I started in on him again, refusing to let him win even this. "One stupid game at a shitty party does not a friendship make, FYI."

Still nothing. Damn, I'd hoped his stuck-up attitude could be wounded by my insulting his hosting skills. I blinked, staring at his annoyingly perfect profile. As if I didn't exist, he stared straight ahead. He moved eventually, but just to scratch his nose, and then he started to dig into his name-brand backpack for some homework to occupy himself. Before I could sputter out some outraged response, Bryce made his presence known, entering the room like a cannonball and taking the seat on my other side with just as much drama.

"Hey, Jadie! Mind if I call you Jadie?"

"Yes, I mind," I deadpanned, but Bryce ignored me.

"Hey, Xan." He waved to his friend, who looked right past me to give Bryce a cool nod. Bryce grinned, not a care in the world. "Some party, huh?"

At the mention of the party, I instantly felt my cheeks turn red. I looked down at my homework again to try to hide it.

"May have been my best yet," Xander answered, and I forgot all about hiding my blush to give him an incredulous look.

"Oh, so you can talk to *him*, but not me?"

Xander didn't even acknowledge that I'd spoken to him, which made me want to pull every one of the perfectly-coiffed hairs out of his stupid head, either in handfuls or one by one. I turned to Bryce, who was grinning from the side of his mouth, clearly getting a kick out of this.

"I hear you had quite the night, Jadie," Bryce said pointedly, bouncing his eyebrows at me. "That pool house has never seen so much excitement."

Oh, shit. Did this mean Dane had told everyone about our encounter in the pool house? Was he spreading rumors as easily as I'd spread my legs for him? This time, instead of blushing, I felt all the blood freeze in my veins.

"I don't know what you mean," I croaked out, and I felt Xander angle his body toward me more than I saw it in my peripheral vision.

"I heard that too, Bryce." Xander spoke carefully, still ignoring me. He talked as if I wasn't in the room. "Wild how she goes from fucking me with her eyes to fucking one of my best friends in less than an hour. There's a word for that, I think."

There was a layer of satisfaction underneath the disdain in Xander's voice. I knew he wanted to call me a slut, but I could also feel the way he'd relish saying it. I could almost hear it, his cool voice whispering in my ear, *My little slut*. It sent a shiver of want down my spine.

"Hey, I think it's pretty fun," Bryce responded. I turned to see him tracing my body, every curve, with hungry eyes. The son of a bitch even had the nerve to lick his lips, then wolfishly grin. "Imagine the kind of trouble she could get into with a few hours to spare."

An image slammed into my head, erotic and raw and utterly preposterous. Suddenly, I could see myself spread out between Xander and Bryce both, naked and waiting, each of them touching me and telling me what a good little slut I was for them. Fantasy me was bookended in bliss, and in real life, I was stuck between two total bullies who were only supposed to be my means for exacting my revenge. And yet here I was, squirming in my seat to try and relieve some of the hot need pooling between my legs. Bryce and Xander watched me like predators hunting especially delicious prey, their gazes aflame like they could tell how turned on I was just at the thought of their hands on me.

I was still learning who I was now that I was Jade, and for the first time, I worried I'd changed too completely in my quest to become a new me. Hannah never would have dreamed

of sleeping with two guys at once, much less two guys she didn't even like. She wasn't satisfied by Owen, but she didn't expect anything so erotic as Xander, Bryce, and if I'm honest, Dane could provide. *Together*. It took a lot of willpower to keep myself from shivering in full view of Bryce and Xander and the rest of our homeroom class.

One thing was for sure. The more I settled into my new role as sexual, powerful, out-for-blood Jade, the less she felt like a lie.

JADE

“I can’t *believe* you ditched me at Xander’s party,” Leah grumbled into her mushy school lunch. She poked at what looked like dog food on her plate with a plastic fork, then put it down on the table to look at me head-on. “Like, I know we haven’t been friends for long, but where’s the loyalty? What about girl code? You’d better have been getting laid by someone *incredibly* hot. I’m talking Hemsworth-level hot, and not the brother nobody knows.”

I suppressed a giggle when Leah glared at me. “Sorry!” I sputtered. “Sorry, really. I wasn’t sleeping with *Thor*—”

“Or that guy from *The Hunger Games*,” she added.

“Right, him either. But... I do have a pretty juicy story to tell you, if you’re up for it.” I winced, thinking of my night at Xander’s party and the mess I’d gotten myself into. At least it would make a good story for my new friend.

Instantly, Leah dropped her angry act and was ready for me to spill the tea. I told her about Never Have I Ever, Bryce and Xander’s almost-flirtatious attention, and then about my partial hookup with Dane. I left out the part about watching him have sex with another girl because it was too embarrassing to admit. Plus, I didn’t need my one friend at this new school to know the extent of my craziness just yet. What she didn’t know wouldn’t hurt her—or me.

“Oh, my *God*, you’ve got to be a good luck charm or something,” Leah squealed as quietly as she could manage, but I still shushed her. “Or maybe you’re the lucky one? I don’t

know. But finding a way to hook up with Dane Schwartz so soon after starting at Coldwater is truly a miracle, and I commend you. I've lowkey wanted that boy to notice me for like three years—even just to make fun of me a little.”

I laughed. “Trust me, you don't want him to make fun of you.”

“Some people are into that, Jade! That's all I'm saying.” She shrugged, and the two of us laughed together.

Our chuckle fest was interrupted, though, by the least expected of visitors joining our little lunch table. One second, Leah and I are struggling to breathe through our amusement, and the next, Dane Schwartz is pulling up a chair and sitting next to me, close enough that I nearly melted at the feeling of his warm outer thigh pressing against mine.

“How's it hangin', new girl?” Dane asked, only glancing at me for a second before his eyes moved to Leah. “And who's your friend?”

“Leah,” she croaked out, and Dane nodded, smiling a little with recognition.

“Right! *Right*. We had drama class together a few years back, yeah?”

“Yeah.” Leah half-laughed, clearly shocked that Dane remembered her. “Yeah, intro to drama. The place where I learned I'm tragically not meant for a life on the stage.”

Dane's laugh was warm and sweet like hot tea with honey, his demeanor holding an easy breezy air I hadn't suspected he was capable of before this moment. “Same here, sister. I'll just stick to reading Shakespeare on the page, the way the Bard definitely didn't intend it.”

Leah giggled at his joke, and I flushed red when I felt his leg press more firmly into mine. Was he being nice to Leah because she was my friend? This felt like the early stages of boyfriend-hood where your prospective partner tries to cozy up to your friends. *My* friends. But I'd only ever had that experience with Owen, who'd really been trying to cozy up to my friends for nefarious purposes. What Dane was doing now

felt... normal. Genuine. Friendly. That simply did not compute.

As Dane and Leah chatted, filling in the gaps that would have been left behind by my utter speechlessness, I marveled at the normalcy of this. There was no hint of flirtation in Dane's interactions with Leah, unlike Owen, who used to make blatant eyes at my friends in front of me and then try to gaslight me into thinking I'd just imagined that because I was so insecure. I hadn't been insecure before Owen's scheming, though. Slowly but surely, Owen even turned all of my friends against me with his put-upon charms.

Part of me resented Owen even more because of how he'd ruined my female friendships. Cassie and Maria had been my two best friends at Worthington, and Owen had slept with both of them by the end, but not before he'd convinced them not to bother being my friend anymore even in appearance. I still missed how Cassie loved to braid my hair during class and Maria's quirky obsession with horoscopes that always seemed weirdly accurate. But even just my brief time knowing Leah already felt like a better replacement for the friends who had so easily left me behind for a smooth-talking boy. Leah was funny, kind, and the way she easily forgave me for ditching her at Xander's party told me she had a generous soul.

Too bad I'd built our entire friendship on lies.

"Oh, come *on*." Dane was laughing louder this time, breaking me out of my thoughts. "You don't seem like a Kardashian kind of girl, Leah. *Please* tell me you've got more brains than that."

Before I could swoop in to Leah's rescue, follow my immediate defensiveness that arose with Dane's sneering tone, a huge grin split Leah's pretty face. "Listen, Schwartz, I can be smart *and* love some petty drama. You think Einstein was all physics, all the time? Nuh-uh. I bet he loved to talk shit on other scientists as a hobby."

"Touché." Dane chortled. I felt his hand come to rest on my knee under the table, and his touch, the memory of our tryst in the pool house, filled me with fire. "We can't all have

impeccable taste in media, I guess. If you ever want some real recommendations of what to watch—or better yet, a fucking *book* to read—I’m your guy.”

Somehow, half of the lunch period had gone by. And here we all were together, having normal conversations that Dane’s snarky snobbery hadn’t even tried to ruin. It wasn’t just Dane’s warm skin practically burning a hole through the fabric of my skirt, the way I could have sworn he was inching the material slowly up my thigh, that had me feeling a little off-kilter. Somehow, this sexy, often-rude enigma of a man had revealed the side of his blunt personality that was actually kind of... funny. Endearing was too strong a word, but he definitely seemed a little more human than the guy who’d blown me off after giving me the strongest orgasm of my life.

“Well, it was nice talking to you, Dane, but I’ve actually gotta get going,” Leah suddenly said, standing up with her lunch tray in hand. “There are some yearbook pages I’m behind on, so I’m gonna head to Mr. Nelson’s room a little early. No, don’t get up! You two stay right where you are.”

The wink Leah gave me wasn’t even trying to be subtle. But before I could find a way to scold her for meddling without tipping off Dane, she was sweeping out of the room in a puff of smoke.

Which left me and Dane alone, his hand slowly creeping up my thigh, my blood singing with desire in response.

Before I could even form a coherent thought, much less a sentence, Dane was leaning into me, pressing his mouth into my hair right by my ear. His breath against my skin gave me goosebumps. He gripped my thigh with a dark possessiveness that made me want to reenact our little scene in the pool house, cafeteria full of students be damned.

“I’ve gotta get my hands on you again,” Dane told me boldly. “That sweet pussy is too good to have just once.”

Fuck. This was so wrong, but my body didn’t care in the slightest. I wanted him to bend me over this lunch table, spank me like I’d fantasized about, and then drive his cock into me. I

clenched my thighs together, which made Dane let out a gruff, amused huff.

“Meet me after school,” Dane said then. His hand inched my skirt further up my legs until his long, strong fingers were pressing into my heated skin. I knew how those fingers could make me come apart. It was getting hard to breathe, much less remind myself that I only wanted to use him for revenge.

“Where?” I rasped, not even able to spare enough inflection to sell the question. Dane pressed his smile against my neck for a brief second, the sensitive skin there practically lighting up with the too-fast touch. He whispered some instructions in my ear, the directions to the place at the back of the school grounds where I should meet him to finish what we’d started Friday night.

Then he let go of me, stood up, and the moment shattered. Clarity fell into place—or tried to through my lustful haze. Dane was gone in a flash, and I was left hot, bothered, and lying to myself that I wasn’t going to go where he sent me.

BRYCE

God, I really loved football more than most things, but today I just wasn't in the fucking mood. There was nothing I wanted to do less than listen to Coach Pritchard yell until his already-red face turned puce, run boring drills, and endlessly tweak our playbook for the rapidly-approaching homecoming game. Still, it was a team sport, and I was the undisputed star of the team. So, I let my body carry me to the locker room on autopilot. The game must go on, or something.

Even though I wanted to tell myself my grumpiness was due to the gloomy weather or the pop quiz I'd failed in third period, or how they'd run out of Jell-O cups in the cafeteria line before I could snag a red one, I knew the real reason was Jade fucking Wells. The bane of my existence, if I had one of those.

It was just sexual frustration manifesting as regular frustration, really. Ever since the new girl had joined our school, all I wanted was to get my hands on her—or my mouth, or any other part of my body she'd let me put on hers. After our flirtatious rapport during her and Xander's little drinking game, and now knowing that she'd fooled around with Dane in Townsends's pool house—even though Dane wasn't chill enough to tell me all the truly *good* details—my needy dick was making my brain go wild. My imagination was borderline feral, really.

There was a little jealousy in it, maybe. I did slightly resent that Dane got to her first. But seeing his reaction to her, the

way he'd been acting a little bit off since Friday night, even for his moody ass, only solidified my obsession. Really, both of my best friends were clearly intrigued by Jade the same way that I was, even though our taste in girls had never overlapped before in all our years of friendship. What kind of magic pussy did this new girl possess that she could get under Xander's impenetrable skin and put Dane Schwartz in such a weird emotional state after some casual second or third base? Damn it, I wanted to find out. And I always learned best through experience.

The locker room was a ghost town when I finally made it there, which was bizarre. I had to blink a couple of times to make sure my restless sleep over the weekend, thanks to a bunch of horny dreams about a certain redhead, hadn't caused me to hallucinate. Nope, the team really wasn't here. Though I'd dragged my feet on the way to practice and I was definitely more than a few minutes late. Even if I'd gotten the time a little wrong and I was somehow early, Vance Trullilo, our obsessive compulsive kicker, was always here by now, at the very least. And there was no sign of that guy anywhere.

"Fucking typical," I grunted as I pulled out my cell phone. Practice must have been canceled and I just didn't get the memo. I started a text to Xander about giving me a ride home as I turned back toward the exit, intending to leave the locker room to wait for him. My uptight nerd of a best friend was always staying late after school for some college-app-cushioning extracurricular or another, so he was probably still around.

But wouldn't you know it? All of my obsessing over Jade Wells seemed to have gotten through to the universe. I bumped straight into the manifestation of all my sexual desires as I was trying to leave.

Jade swore when we collided, and I instinctively caught her before she could fall over from the force of our bodies colliding. I'd always been big, beefy enough that my mom called me her little bowling ball when I was a kid until I was old enough to find that a little offensive. Jade's warm skin seemed to call to me through her clothes, and it took a lot of

effort to let her go. At least I could appease myself by looking at her.

Jade's surprised face, I thought, must not be far off from her orgasm face. My cock twitched in my pants just from that thought. Her lush, pink lips were parted in a perfect O, her cheeks fetchingly pink with embarrassment, and those flashing green eyes were huge in her delicate face.

"Why so surprised, baby? Didn't expect to see me in... the men's locker room?" I smirked at her. I loved watching her blush deepen. *Wonder what shades of pink the rest of her will turn when I fuck her.*

"Sorry," Jade sputtered. "I, uh, was looking for—for someplace else. I didn't mean to—I mean, I wasn't like, looking for you or anything."

"Really? Bummer." A devious thought occurred to me, and I gave her a slow, wolfish grin. I watched her throat move as she swallowed. "Or maybe you're right where you wanted to be, huh? You're a little voyeur, right? Maybe you were hoping to see something you shouldn't, just like in the pool house."

"No," Jade squeaked. I moved closer to her, our bodies almost touching.

"No shame in it, baby girl. Lots of girls wanna see my cock. I bet you'd really like to see how I can use it to please a girl like you, huh?"

I could *feel* Jade's breath quicken, see the gentle swelling of her breasts with each desperate gulp of air she pulled into her lungs. I'd never been really good at shutting up, not overstepping with my words, but now I was too dazed with desire to stop myself.

"I've never had any complaints in bed. Girls seem to like how I touch them. How I can keep fucking until they scream my name—athlete's stamina, baby girl. And I eat pussy like it's my damn job."

Jade's lips parted on a tiny whimper, and fucking hell, I wanted to hear what kind of noises she could make if I actually touched her. Maybe I was an arrogant son of a bitch,

but I was honest, too—the girls I'd fucked all came back for seconds and thirds, and I prided myself on fucking like I was in it to win it.

“You talk a big game,” Jade said, and even through the breathy need in her voice, she still managed to maintain that fiery challenge I'd come to associate with her. Her eyes strayed from mine, moving to stare at my lips, so I licked them, relishing how she mirrored me by moistening her own lips with her tongue. I saw her next words before I heard them. “Maybe you should stop talking, pretty boy, and show me what that mouth can really do.”

JADE

Reckless. Staying in this locker room, flirtatiously taunting Bryce, not pulling away—every bit of this ridiculous moment was the definition of reckless. My head spun from the speed at which everything had shifted. I was supposed to be meeting up with Dane right now, but instead, here I was, facing down a truly irresistible football player in an empty locker room, daring him to ravish me against my better judgment. I guess it served Dane right to be stood up after the way he'd played hot and cold with me since we'd met. Regardless, no power on Earth would be enough to pull me away from Bryce, his honeyed gaze, the heat coming off his large body in waves.

Bryce was an athlete, and though I hadn't known him long personally, he wasn't hard to read. The number-one vibe he gave off, other than the asshole vibe I was stubbornly ignoring right now, was *master of the double-dog dare*. So I knew he'd accept my challenge even before he backed me against the lockers and finally kissed me.

And *Christ*, the intensity of his kiss was enough to have me melting in his mighty hands. I kissed Bryce back like I'd die if I didn't.

I'd never kissed anyone but Owen before Friday, and now I was kissing two different guys in the span of a week. Two incredible kissers, to boot, their masculine sensuality surpassing Owen's boyish attempts at love without even trying. Even though we both knew this was a stupid idea, Bryce made no attempt to calm the crackling fire of lust

between us, instantly parting my lips with his own and sighing into me. Where Dane was dark seduction, danger in every flick of his skilled tongue, kissing Bryce felt like delving into a supernova of sunshine. He was warm, *hot*, full of wild energy that almost made me giddy when he teased my tongue with his own.

God, what I wouldn't give to be double teamed by those dueling energies in bed. Dane's darkness and Bryce's light mixed into one seductive shadow, and my pussy was already molten with just the thought of either—both—of them shoving their cocks inside me. One in my mouth, quieting my lustful cries while the other drove into my pussy, giving it what Owen never could. With so little effort, Bryce and Dane were both intoxicating me, and I'd definitely gone past my limit. I clutched at Bryce's hips, pulling them toward me, too far gone to stop.

My passion grew until Bryce growled into my mouth and pulled away,

ducking down to kiss my neck before I could protest about the break in contact.

"So fucking hot," I heard him whisper as his tongue tasted my delicate skin, sent a tremor of pleasure down my spine. His hands started to roam, too, one of them moving to grab my ass, rumpling my skirt in a wanton fist. I sighed as he massaged my backside and nipped at my collarbone at the same time.

"Is... is that all you've got, Fisher?" I struggled to taunt him, the result coming out breathy and not very convincing. Bryce sucked on my skin, trying to leave a mark, and slapped my ass in a quick motion that made me gasp. Punishment for my backtalk, or a reward? Either way, I needed more. My clit was crying for his attention, and no matter how hard I tried to rock my hips against him, he wasn't in a good enough position for me to get the right friction.

"This is nice and all," I continued, my voice more certain this time. Maybe I was possessed by some kind of horny demon. "But you're hardly blowing my mind. Get your head in the game."

Like I'd flipped a switch, that threw Bryce into a near-animal frenzy. He growled, and the next thing I knew, he'd practically thrown me back against the locker and crouched at my feet. Before I could catch my breath, he was pulling my legs apart, roughly positioning one foot so that it was propped up on the bench behind him, my thighs spread obscenely in front of his face. I felt my entire body flush red at the implications of this, and Bryce gave me a feral grin.

"You figured me out, Jadie. I'm always down for a challenge. Now let's see how sweet you taste."

I struggled to breathe as Bryce shoved up my skirt. Still grinning, his pupils blown with lust, he pressed his face to the front of my damp panties and I cried out at the gentle pressure.

Bryce kissed me through the thin material, wet and hard, right at the apex of my folds. He took a deep breath, let out a low whistle.

"Jesus, Jade, you're so ready. I can fucking smell it." Then he dipped one finger inside my panties and felt my wetness, groaning in satisfaction. I let out a pained whimper. But when I expected him to tease me further, deny me the ecstasy of his bare tongue on my clit, he surprised me again by jerking the fabric to the side and repeating the same open-mouthed kiss with no barrier. This time, the sound that exited my lips was a shaky moan.

Bryce dragged the flat of his tongue through my folds from bottom to top, flicking the tip against my clit in a few quick strokes that made me twitch before he started from the bottom again. Another long, sensual lick, and he hummed against me, almost making me scream from the vibration of it.

"Such a pretty pussy," Bryce breathed, and I felt the air flutter over my heated skin like silk. "This what you've been hiding, new girl? Because it was worth the wait. Fucking perfect. Delicious, too."

I was almost delirious with lust. Dirty talk wasn't something I'd ever considered, but now, I wanted Bryce to whisper sweet filth into my ear for the rest of time. He locked eyes with me from below, pulling my hips forward a little so

he was at a better angle to maintain eye contact when he kissed between my legs again. And when he did, it was like he was greeting his lover after a long absence.

“Fuck,” I let out accidentally. It was hotter than I could even believe to see his head between my thighs, glimpse the playfulness still visible in his brown irises even when his tongue made a wicked circle on the hood of my clit. Nothing had ever felt this good—well, not since Dane finger-fucked me Friday night, at least. Maybe I was the luckiest girl on earth, having both of these skilled men focus their attention on my pleasure. I let my fingers get lost in Bryce’s soft golden-blond hair as he feasted on me, eating my pussy like I was his last meal.

I felt the warning of my oncoming orgasm like the ground’s vibrations before a stampede. My legs trembled, and Bryce just gripped my hips harder as he doubled down, burying his face in my wetness. I mindlessly gyrated against his face, earning me another appreciative groan. The rumble against my clit was pure ecstasy.

When I came, I came hard enough that I couldn’t breathe for several excruciating seconds, intense pleasure ricocheting through my entire body. My head fell back against the locker as I was finally able to pant after who knew how long. I pulled Bryce’s hair, partly for purchase and partly because I expected him to stop licking me, let me come back down from my peak. But instead, after a brief moment of staring up at me with insatiable hunger still burning in his eyes, my juices painting his lower face shiny, Bryce hummed low in his chest and dove back in, pressing his open mouth right over my still-throbbing clit.

I couldn’t help but scream when he sucked the bud into his mouth and did something that must have been black magic with his tongue. It was the perfect pressure, the sweetest pleasure-pain, and in a few more seconds I was breaking apart again, my second orgasm somehow even stronger than the first.

“Fuck, Bryce!” I cried out shamelessly in the empty locker room, the shrill sound of it echoing against the walls. I rode

out my orgasm against his face, jerking my hips with no grace, just animal need. He palmed my ass again, holding me upright. Which was necessary because my legs felt like spaghetti. *Two* orgasms, and I hadn't even touched him yet.

Yet. When Bryce stood up, I couldn't help but notice the bulging erection barely being contained by his gray sweatpants. I couldn't see *everything*, but I could see enough to tell that he was big and almost painfully hard. Just the sight of him made my inner muscles throb again, ready for another round with him.

And damn it, why not? I'd already crossed a line I couldn't un-cross. I moved toward Bryce, reaching down to press my hand against the outline of his dick. He tensed at the touch, but he didn't pull away.

He let out a husky laugh. "Still up for more, Jadie?"

"God, yes," I breathed.

"My kind of girl," he murmured.

And then his athlete's strength came in handy. In a couple of quick motions, my panties were gone—ripped, disintegrated, I didn't care—and Bryce was sitting on the bench, pulling me down on top of him. I straddled his thick thighs, sinking down onto his lap, and I could have laughed at how fucking *good* it felt to have his erection poised beneath me, hard and ready, even if he was still fully clothed. The rightness of it was almost an overwhelming relief despite the fire that was building back up in my blood.

Who needed just *two* measly orgasms? A third would be even better and so easy to find if he were inside me. I was going for as many as Bryce could manage before he finished himself.

Leaning into the boldness afforded to me by my new life of lies, I reached into Bryce's sweatpants and pulled his rock-solid cock free, gasping at the sight of it. Long, thick, veined—I was almost dripping with how badly I needed it inside me. Bryce looked at me, incredulous for the first time, and issued his own challenge.

“What are you waiting for? Afraid you can’t handle it all?”

“Watch me,” I said, and his eyes got big as I guided his tip to my entrance and slowly started to take him inside me.

I was soaked, ready for him, but it still took time and effort to take Bryce’s substantial length. I was panting after the first inch or so, relishing in the stretch, and Bryce was surprisingly tender, taking my face in his hands.

“You’re doing so good, baby. Look how sweetly you take my cock.” He kissed me hard, then moved his hands down to bracket my hips. “So tight, but so wet for me—you’re going to take every inch of it, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” I gasped as I sank further onto him. Bryce gritted his teeth and let out a low, closed-mouthed moan.

“Christ, that’s perfect, baby. Never felt a pussy this good before.” His hands flexed against me, a quick squeeze. “A little more.”

It sounded like he was giving me instructions, and I was all too willing to oblige, but Bryce beat me to the punch by thrusting upward with his hips, a tiny jerk that pressed against my G-spot. Moaning was a foregone conclusion. I was almost seated to the hilt now, and the delicious stretch of my inner muscles was such an exciting new sensation. I couldn’t wait anymore. So I took a deep breath and then sealed our hips together, burying Bryce’s full length inside me. Both of us let out a strangled cry.

It was once I started to ride him, chasing the exquisite feeling of fullness that made me want to sob with pleasure while he rocked my hips with his strong hands and swore quietly in my ear, that I realized how far I’d gone off the path I was supposed to be following. My revenge plan was nowhere to be found, not even in my line of sight. But this new turn of events—it felt entirely too good to stop.

XANDER

I was annoyed, borderline pissed, as I headed to the locker room. Bryce was supposed to meet me at least ten minutes before so I could give him a ride home now that I was done tutoring some poor freshman, but he hadn't shown up in the parking lot, so I had to go looking for him. My best friend had a tendency to pull unreliable shit like this, and we'd fought about it enough times that an instant anger switch flipped this time. But the new sight that greeted me when I burst into the same old locker room I'd visited with Bryce dozens of times before wiped all the annoyance from my body. There wasn't room for anything but the wave of inescapable arousal drowning me where I stood, frozen in place.

It was Jade's face, eyes closed and mouth agape in pleasure, that I saw first. A moan rang through the space, echoing, shooting straight to my cock so that I was already half-hard. Nothing could have prepared me for the beauty of that sound, or for the sight of her heavy breasts bouncing, the top of her dress unbuttoned and putting them on full display as she grinded against Bryce's cock. Her small hands came up to pinch her nipples, seeking relief from her intense need, and I clenched my own hands into fists. Jesus, she'd fill my hands perfectly—overflow them, really, just the way I liked. And those rosy-pink nipples were made for my mouth.

Bryce's back was to me, his shirt on the floor, baring the strong muscles under his sun-browned skin. I could see the flexing of his lower back as he matched Jade's rhythm with his own upward thrusts. His breath came out in heavy pants laced

with obscenities, whispered praise of Jade's tits and the tightness of her pussy. He was the luckiest motherfucker on earth, I thought as I took a step further into the scene, unable to stop my body's reaction.

My footsteps didn't make a sound, but Jade's eyes sprang open anyway, locking onto mine instantly. She gasped, just another beat in the sexual song they were playing together, unnoticed by Bryce. But her hips maintained their rhythm, and her eyes didn't stray from me. She seemed to be egging me on, rewarding my voyeurism, when she grabbed her breasts and pushed them upward, taunting me.

Some wild, unhinged energy carried me further into the locker room until I was only a few feet away from the erotic scene. My body pulsed with need the closer I got, like a magnet was pulling me toward them. Bryce finally noticed me, then, catching me in his peripheral vision.

"Fuck," he exclaimed, jumping a little with surprise. Jade was still astride him, seemingly unbothered as he turned his face toward me. There was a tumultuous expression twisting his features into some mix of intense pleasure, shock, fiery rage—but something else, too. Was that... curiosity that quirked up his brows? The same thing must have been on my face, especially when Bryce seemed to pause. He was still inside her, making no attempt to throw her off, cover her exposed chest, stop this now that they'd been caught. But he was staring at me. Bryce and Dane both had always treated me like the leader of our friend group, and I got the sense now that he was asking me for permission.

"Don't stop on my account," I heard myself say, a dark tinge of lust adding a rasp to my voice. Indecision flickered in Bryce's eyes.

"It's okay," I heard Jade breathe. Her arms found their way around his neck, her fingers playing with the ends of his hair by his nape. She leaned forward to press a kiss to his jaw, then stared me down again when she pulled back. Blown pupils, flushed skin, kiss-swollen lips. She was the picture of temptation. Jade spoke to us both when she repeated, "It's okay."

Just like that, Bryce's spell broke, a choice made. We were determined to cross a new line, the three of us. He jerked his head at me as if to say *As you were*, then tightened his grip on Jade's hips. In seconds, the two of them had regained their punishing rhythm, letting me watch as they drove each other to ecstasy. The sounds of sex filled the locker room, wet and percussive and utterly exhilarating to me.

Slowly, I crossed the room. I sat on an adjacent bench that gave me a perfect view. Jade's red hair was unbound, swinging past her shoulders in time with her grinding on Bryce's dick. Her lush lips stayed parted, letting out breathless sounds, needy moans, and even a sharp squeal when Bryce took her nipple between his teeth. Even though my own dick was fully hard in my pants, aching for Jade and pressing painfully against my zipper, I knew I'd get more satisfaction watching this play out than trying to relieve my need with my own hand.

Good things came to those who waited, after all. And it wasn't hard to be patient when I knew I had control, that the two people fucking like animals in front of me would do anything I wanted. I knew getting my own taste of Jade Wells would be worth the wait.

JADE

Fucking Bryce Fisher while his best friend watched was, without a doubt, not part of my plan. But Owen Prescott and my whole silly plan didn't seem to matter in the slightest when Xander's icy eyes were practically scorching my skin, heightening the pleasure with the seductive taboo nature of it all.

I found myself putting on a show, watching for Xander's reaction as well as Bryce's when I increased my pace, putting my years of horse riding to good use. Soon enough, I was slamming down on Bryce's cock again and again until my knees trembled and my inner walls would be sore. Xander didn't move, but I could see how his hands clenched into fists where they gripped the bench he sat on. He ached to touch me as badly as I wanted him to do it.

"Christ, baby," Bryce breathed when I rocked my hips at a slower pace again. My pleasure was cresting, building with each brush of his rigid head against my G-spot, and I let out a low moan. "You gonna come all over my cock?"

"Yes," I half-sobbed, and I locked eyes with Xander when Bryce's mouth closed over one of my nipples, swirling and teasing it as his hands directed my hips to pick up the pace. "Fuck, Bryce, I'm—"

He was driving me to the edge as he neared his own orgasm, his breath ragged, his brow furrowed with the strain. I wanted to feel this good, a slave to the pleasure inside me, for the rest of my life. Then it happened. Finally, I felt my entire

body tremble, my abdomen tensing exquisitely as I came almost violently, my inner walls clenching around Bryce as he spent inside me. I was hypnotized by the pulse of his dick, the heat of his cum, and my only coherent thought through my ecstasy was *Is it over now? I don't want it to be over now.*

But before I could catch my breath for very long and start to consider leaving the locker room—or trying to, anyway, since I'd ridden him hard enough that I wasn't sure I could walk yet, equestrian training be damned—Xander broke the silent moment with a slow, dramatic clap. The sound echoed through the locker room. I met Xander's too-blue gaze.

“That was a nice show, new girl,” he almost purred, looking me over. I almost wanted to cover myself, my still-exposed chest, but it was a little late for that kind of modesty. “But I think you've got another encore in you. Don't you agree, Bryce?”

“Absolutely,” Bryce agreed in a low growl.

Slowly, not without trepidation, I walked over to Xander's bench, stopping in front of him. Even though he was still sitting, our eyes were pretty much level since he was so much taller than me. His gaze dared me to do something, make a move, so I started to lean in for a kiss, ignoring every signal in my brain that said I hated him and didn't want to kiss him at all. By now, my body knew better.

But when my lips were an inch from Xander's, he pulled back, smirking as he watched my face fall. There was that bully energy again, always taunting, always sure to have the upper hand.

“I'm not sure you've earned a kiss just yet,” Xander breathed. “Get on your knees, Jade.”

Dueling fires roared to life in my blood. Anger, defiance, a refusal to let him boss me around—but there was a deep desire to follow his orders, too. I wanted to submit to him, for him to use me for his pleasure. To see his cock bare before me and take it in my mouth, proving to him that I wasn't lying about my lack of a gag reflex before, even if I'd only said it to torture him.

“You’re not the boss of me, Xander.” I propped my hands on my hips and relished the way his eyes strayed from mine only a second to notice the enticing swell of my breasts.

“Not yet,” he allowed. “But you’ll want me to be soon enough. On your knees, new girl.”

“What’s in it for me?” I sneered. I couldn’t remember being this bratty with my parents before, but Xander brought it out of me. It thrilled me to see how his lips twitched, holding back a smile.

“You get to taste my cock, you little brat. And if you’re lucky, you may get to swallow me down, too.”

I couldn’t help but let out a tiny whimper. The shockwave of want that shot straight to my pussy was too intense to keep up the bratty act. Especially when I felt more than heard Bryce standing up and walking over to us. When I went to my knees in front of Xander, even the sensation of the hard linoleum adding to the eroticism, Bryce’s strong hands pulled my hair back from my face. It was shockingly soft. Divine.

Xander watched me as I reached for the waistband of his pants. Slowly, carefully, I undid his zipper, maintaining eye contact until it was all the way down and I reached into his boxer-briefs. I couldn’t look away from his dick, then.

Somehow, it was elegant, a perfect match for Xander’s classic, statuesque handsomeness, long, thick, and pulsing with need that mirrored my own. I took him into my hand and relished the way he filled it. I knew I’d enjoy him filling my mouth even more.

With the first taste of him, an exploratory lick starting at the base and slowly dragging up to his tip, I was near rabid. Xander’s smooth, lean torso clenched, jerking his cock in my gentle grip, but he kept a cool, detached expression on his face. As if he was bored by this. It only made me want to please him more, made me want to knock him out of his cool and collected act with the power of my wicked mouth.

I heard Bryce groan behind me when I finally closed my lips around the head of Xander’s erection. God, the perfect

salty smoothness of him was heaven, and it was automatic the way I sucked him further inside, relishing the stretch of my jaw. Xander's breath was starting to quicken as I gripped his shaft with more pressure, cupping his balls with my other hand as I sucked him sloppily, taking him all the way to my throat.

"Good girl," Xander growled at me through eyes narrowed and almost black with pleasure. In response, I let the head of his cock reach all the way to the back of my throat, sucking him deep and hard before I pulled him partly out again. "Christ, yes, like that."

"She looks so pretty with your cock in her mouth," Bryce's voice chimed in from behind me, full of something like wonder.

"She sure does," Xander agreed.

I bobbed my head quicker, aching to taste Xander as he orgasmed down my willing throat. Bryce's grip in my hair tightened, and I loved it when he pulled a little, sending tingles down my spine. The wet sounds of my mouth filled the space as I sucked Xander with more vigor than I'd ever shown with Owen in the past. Xander Townsend had more to work with, anyway, and I moaned around his thickness, pressing my tongue harder to the underside of his cock so he'd feel the ecstasy of the vibration, too.

In perfect time with my efforts, Xander let out a whispered "*Fuck*," and the wetness of his precum coated my tongue. I redoubled my efforts, ravenous for him to come in my mouth. I could almost come again just from the thought of it. But when Xander's frantic grip found the back of my head, too, he pulled me away instead of shoving himself further down my throat. I whimpered, suddenly distraught at the idea of not tasting him. Xander gave me a wicked smile that was no less elegant for the ruddy color that graced his cheeks.

"Ah, ah," he started slowly, breathlessly. "You've been a good girl, but I don't think you've earned the right to drink me down yet. You'll watch me come on your tits, and you'll like it."

Oh, *fuck*. That authoritative tone in his voice, the wanton red of the head of his cock on the precipice of finishing—it was all too good to be true. I nodded frantically, enjoying even the tiny sting of embarrassment when Xander coldly laughed at my eagerness. He nodded at me, and I understood what he was asking without words, so I wrapped both of my hands around him, jerking him off as I leaned in, my bare tits swelling against his slick head.

When Xander came, he cried out, and somehow, it was still a dignified sound. His cock pulsed in my hands and hot seed streaked my chest, sending echoes of pleasure through my body as it made contact. The sight of his face, jaw lax with pleasure, pupils blown, skin flushed... it was truly beautiful in a way he couldn't be when he was so perfectly buttoned-up and restrained. That version of him was too cookie-cutter to be something special, but right now, he was raw and wild. And it was all because of me that this gorgeous guy had come apart. I was the reason he panted hard and relaxed his hand in my hair, moving to cup my cheek in his palm as if he didn't have the energy to grip any longer. Holy hell, but it was powerful to have that kind of effect on someone like Xander. My head was reeling.

It became nearly impossible to regain my composure when Xander recovered from his orgasm, though. In a few quick motions, he'd tucked himself back into his pants, zipped himself up, and nodded at Bryce like they'd just closed a business deal. In seconds, the two of them were standing up and starting to leave the locker room. Bryce shot me a wink, and Xander's mean-spirited smirk was all the acknowledgement he gave me. As if I wasn't still crouched on the locker room floor, covered in his cum, the taste of him still fresh on my tongue.

Damn him. Even through the red haze of rage that clouded my vision as they blew me off again, underneath it all, I liked this humiliation, too. The taboo of it all. I still might not have liked Xander or Bryce as people, but my body loved everything they did to me, and even after coming three times, I still felt too much molten desire between my legs to feel any ounce of regret.

DANE

It may have been petty, but I was grinning to myself when I left school with no intentions of meeting up with Jade Wells.

The girl had too much power over me. I was realizing that more and more as I continued to replay our time in the pool house in my head on an infinite loop, struggling to control my body's natural response to the memory of her taste, the feeling of her in my hands. Girls didn't usually stick in my mind after I'd fucked them. Maybe it was because I hadn't been inside Jade for real, hadn't even gotten to satisfy my own need in my single-minded quest to make her come, that she was still on my mind. Either way, it was satisfying to stand her up, to take some of the power back.

I couldn't wait to see the pissed-off look on her face next time I saw her at school. She didn't seem stupid, but she was definitely bold and potentially cocky enough to assume I would go to all that effort to plan a secret rendezvous just to hook up with her again. I almost wanted to laugh maniacally at the thought of her waiting outside the school all alone.

A spoiled rich girl like her—because she *had* to be a spoiled rich girl, that energy came off her in waves—deserved to be taken down a peg. As someone who grew up in a trailer with my apathetic grandmother and addict parents who never gave a shit whether I lived or died, I couldn't stand people like her. It was honestly a miracle I was close friends with someone like Xander. I couldn't pretend that I didn't resent him and his cushy life sometimes, but we'd been friends since

before that kind of thing mattered to me. Hell, Bryce's big, loving, middle-class family was hard to face sometimes, too. Seemed like everyone around me had something I didn't, and it was hard to go through my life without being miffed about it.

Whatever. My friends were worth the reminders of my not-great station in life, especially since Xander was always generous enough to let us reap the benefits of his daddy's money. I shoved my bitterness down as I climbed into my shitty, run-down old station wagon. A few deep breaths through my nose and I knew I could face my two best friends like I always did. We had a regular routine of meeting at Xander's place and playing video games in his basement after school—with Bryce when he didn't have football practice, and just us two when he did. I was looking forward to kicking some ass in the most recent *Call of Duty*.

But when I parked my junker in the driveway of Xander's fancy house in his bougie subdivision and texted the guys that I was here, there was no response. Bryce's car wasn't here, but he shared it with his siblings, so that wasn't too unusual. But Xander's Mercedes wasn't in the garage, either. Where the hell were those guys?

I waited. And waited. And I waited some more, because damn it, loyalty mattered to me. But I was more than a little annoyed when what felt like hours passed before Xander's car finally pulled up, carrying both of my idiot friends and some kind of weird *vibe*.

That was really the only way I could describe it as they slowly clambered out of the car and came to meet me in the driveway. They looked... guilty? Starstruck? Some kind of mixture of emotions I'd never seen them express in all the years of our friendship? Maybe I was just losing it, but something deep inside me said Jade Wells, the bane of Coldwater High's existence since she walked into it, was behind it. I didn't know how, but I knew.

When we made it to the basement, our usual hangout spot, neither of my friends came out with it. I wasn't about to ask them about their feelings, though, so I pretended I couldn't

sense the weirdness in the room with us like an unsettling fourth friend.

“No practice today?” I asked Bryce, trying to go about our usual business as Xander set up the PS5. He didn’t look like he’d showered, which he always did after practice, which only further solidified the strangeness of how late they were getting to Xander’s house. What the hell could they have been doing for so long? It’d been over an hour.

“Uh, no—it was canceled,” Bryce said. He cleared his throat and avoided my eyes. Xander wasn’t looking at me, either.

Then where the hell were you guys for the past hour? I didn’t say. I simply grunted in acknowledgement, hoping one of them would cave. But when the silence stretched on, only the sound of Xander digging around in the entertainment center for another game controller filling the basement, I couldn’t deal with it. I had to start a conversation.

“You’ll never believe what went down with me and the new girl today,” I told them, and both of my friends’ ears practically perked up like a dog hearing the word “treat”. *Of course, that gets their attention.* I was getting pretty tired of Jade Wells taking up so much metaphorical space around here.

“What happened?” Bryce asked, his voice a little strained. Xander just looked at me as if to say *Go ahead.*

“Well, after what went down in the pool house, apparently, she couldn’t get enough,” I said. “So today, I asked her to meet me after school for a little more fun. Too bad for her, I didn’t show.”

“So *that’s* where she was going,” Bryce blurted out as if I’d answered a burning question. I didn’t understand what he was talking about. His eyes got wide, and Xander shot him a glare that could have put an eye out.

“Okay, what the *fuck* is going on with you guys?” I finally asked in an explosion of frustration. “There’s clearly something you’re not telling me, and I have a feeling it’s about whatever made you guys late today. Christ, spit it out already.”

“Well, your evil plan failed, first of all,” Xander said in his usual bored, above-it-all tone.

“What do you mean?”

“Standing up Jade,” he said, and since when was *he* calling her by her name? That was almost more confusing than what he said next. “It didn’t have the desired effect, Dane, because we happen to know she stood *you* up, too. Bryce and I had an... interesting encounter with her in the locker rooms. That’s why we were late.”

I paused for a long second, looking back and forth between my two best friends, searching for answers I wasn’t sure I really wanted. “What... what are you saying? Did you guys fuck her or something?”

It was a shot in the dark, almost a joke even though I could sense that I was right. Except I couldn’t be right, because the idea that this girl had gotten all of us completely pussy-whipped in the short amount of time she’d been here was completely bonkers, right? But Bryce winced, never one to be very good at hiding his feelings. And Xander’s smirk definitely gave smug just-got-laid energy.

“Technically, Bryce fucked her,” Xander explained matter-of-factly. “I was just the lucky bastard who walked in and got to watch. And then the little slut sucked my cock. Quite the afternoon.”

He shrugged like it was no big deal. I blinked at them both, hoping they were joking. But Bryce gave a not-quite-solemn nod to confirm, and I had to close my eyes for a minute as the anger built up inside me, buzzing around like a swarm of bees with no idea of whom to sting.

I was a little mad at the two of them, I guess. For not telling me about this immediately, if not for fucking the girl I was trying not to be interested in. But that didn’t feel like the full truth because I had no claim over Jade, and this didn’t feel like a possessive sort of jealousy, anyway. In fact, the idea of her being a little slut, hopping from one cock to the next in the span of an afternoon, almost satisfied some deep, primal arousal in me. And I couldn’t be mad at my friends for taking

that opportunity—better them than some other douchebag at our school.

Of course, I *was* still jealous that Bryce and Xander had gotten to have her in a way I hadn't yet. And I would stand by that *yet*, to be honest, because now I had to actually fuck her, if only to maintain my membership in this weird secret Down Bad For Jade Wells club we'd all founded.

But then it dawned on me. The real source of my anger, the true root, was that stupid fact that Jade hadn't fallen into my trap. She'd stood me up, ruining my plan to regain the power in our dynamic. Hell, she'd obliterated it by screwing Bryce *and* Xander, proving she had the upper hand over me *and* any other guy in her immediate vicinity. And wouldn't you know it, that knowledge of sweet, sexy little Jade Wells's secret man eater persona only made me want her more. It was goddamn painfully hot to think that, despite her innocent appearance, she was so liberated as to engage in voyeurism *and* exhibitionism, even venturing into a little group sex when the opportunity presented itself. *Imagine what kind of trouble you could get her into*, I thought wickedly.

"Well," I started slowly, needing to break the tension as my friends clearly waited for me to yell at them, "Does the fact that you guys had group sex mean I'm out of the squad now? That's a new level of friend bonding, I think. Honestly, I don't know if I should be offended that I wasn't invited."

Bryce was the first to laugh, loud and proud as usual, though Xander's shoulders shook with his own quiet laughter, too. I grinned, and just like that, the three of us were past the weirdness and able to play our game.

I wasn't really thinking about video games, though. My brain was caught in a horny maelstrom of fantasies about Jade. Jade begging me for forgiveness after she sucked and fucked my friends, offering her sweet body up on a platter for me to devour. Jade on her knees, atoning for her sins with her full lips around my cock. Jade taking it from behind, tears streaming down her face from a mixture of pleasure and pain as I pounded into her, punishing and raw.

Luckily, the basement was too dark for my friends to see the pent-up frustration tenting the front of my pants. But we all knew *something* was off based on how our stupid video game was going. After my character died for a third time in a row, I swore up a storm, resisting the urge to smash Xander's expensive TV by throwing my controller at it. Xander was silent when he usually gave us clear orders, taking the leadership role he was born for even in this. Meanwhile, usually happy-go-lucky Bryce was playing with no mercy, destroying both Xander and me even though we usually played more as a team.

"Fuck!" Xander yelled in an uncharacteristic loss of control after Bryce killed his character. He rounded on Bryce. "What the hell, man? You're playing like a madman. It's not even fun."

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Bryce feigned innocence, throwing up his hands.

"Bullshit."

"Oh, I know what it is," I said, my tone low and ominous. My friends looked at me with serious expressions, golden brown eyes and icy blue ones locking on me with matching concern. I kept a straight face as I gave my diagnosis. "I've seen this before, fellas, and it's not good. Bryce is overcharged on pussy power."

"Shut up." Bryce laughed, shoving me off the couch. I cackled from the floor as Xander shook his head at us.

"Idiots," he muttered. But despite the pretentious air he carried through the world for other people, he couldn't convince us that he wasn't just as young and stupid as we were—we knew him better than anyone. So he let himself be a normal teenager instead of some dignified prince, landing a perfect dig at me. "Explains why your strategy is so shitty, though, Dane. You're pussy deficient. I hear they make a pill for that."

I was laughing too hard for my "fuck you!" to have the desired effect.

When we settled down, we gave up on the PlayStation, realizing collectively that something bigger was on all of our minds. Well, something five-two with curves for days and a fiery temper.

“The new girl is trouble,” Xander told us.

“No arguments here,” Bryce agreed.

“Oh, obviously.” I paused, shrugged. “But we know trouble is kind of my brand, so it’s only right that I fuck her, too.”

“If she even wants more from you after Friday,” Xander pointed out.

“She does,” I said. “Something tells me her trying to stand me up was some kind of foreplay. And clearly, after the way she acted with the two of you, she’s fucking insatiable.”

“God, is she.” Bryce sighed dreamily, clearly traveling back to the locker room in his mind. “I got her to come three times, but I just know that if either of us had wanted to fuck her again, she would have spread her legs right there on the locker room floor.”

Xander and I both groaned, and all three of us pretended not to notice how we each crossed our legs or grasped at throw pillows to cover our laps. Jade Wells had to be a fucking witch or something to have this much sexual magnetism for the three of us. It’s not like we’d been struggling to get laid before she showed up.

“We’re not going to fight over this girl, are we?” Xander asked, striving for a detached, disinterested tone. But I could hear the vulnerability underneath the question. Bryce and I were probably the only people who saw the chinks in Xander’s shiny armor, and I knew his friends were more important to him, even, than his pristine image, his money, or his dream of going to Harvard. His worry was the same one I had deep down, too. That somehow, Jade Wells and her black magic pussy were going to tear the three of us apart.

“Nah,” Bryce piped up. “No way, dude. I mean, you were in the locker room. I had no problem sharing.”

“And I see no reason she can’t fuck all three of us if she wants,” I spoke up reasonably. A dark thought struck me, though, so I hurried to add, “as long as she’s not fucking anyone else.”

“Agreed,” my friends said in unison.

“Not necessarily all together, though,” Xander hurried to add.

“No! No, duh,” I sputtered.

“Yeah, that was fun, but I’m good with flying solo.” Bryce half-laughed. It was almost weird how not weird he and Xander were being about sharing the same girl. “You good on your own, Great Dane?”

I stuck up my middle finger, earning another signature Bryce guffaw.

Now that our agreement—a *gentleman’s agreement*, Xander jokingly called it—about sharing Jade Wells was settled, the strangeness had left the basement, leaving the three of us to our normal afternoons. Xander and Bryce worked on homework while I blew mine off, scrolling social media on my phone for lack of anything better to do. At least Jade Wells couldn’t plague me online. I’d already confirmed she didn’t have a social media presence over the weekend.

But as I scrolled through people’s shared astrology posts, selfies, and posts about the upcoming homecoming dance, the universe decided to throw another Jade-Wells-shaped curveball my way. Bryce was the sporty one, so I almost didn’t catch it, scrolling past a photo on my feed at first before the quick glance I’d caught registered in my brain. Turning away from Xander and Bryce as they worked on Bryce’s math homework together, I dragged my thumb frantically over my screen, willing the photo I’d just glimpsed to come back.

And there it was. A poorly-lit selfie of three friends, two girls and a guy, their faces shoved close together and smiling. The photo was shared by someone I didn’t know, but it came up on my feed because Owen was tagged in it. It was an older photo of him, but that was his face in the center. The girl on

the left was the one who'd posted it, giving it a *Throwback!* caption that would have told me it was from over a year ago even if the date at the top didn't. I didn't recognize her. But to Owen's right was a blonde girl with a familiar smile. Hovering over the photo showed me her name. *Hannah Wells*.

It was like I'd been hit by a train, the way all of the truths and mysteries of Jade Wells slammed into me in a wave of realization. *Hannah*. That was her real name—that was why I couldn't find *Jade* anywhere online. She was *the* Hannah, Owen's long-time girlfriend he always complained about to Xander, Bryce, and me until they broke up a while back. The same Hannah whom he'd laughed at because she'd switched schools after they broke up. I'd never met Hannah when they were together, since she was such a "killjoy", according to Owen, and always avoided our parties. I had never even wanted to meet her, having no interest in getting to know Owen further as we'd drifted apart over the years. But now I knew that I had met some version of her, after all.

Did this mean Jade Wells, the temptress who'd already tangled herself into a knot with me and my friends, wasn't real? That the pleasure we'd all shared with her was somehow false, too? A box of red hair dye, a new name—it couldn't erase the fact that she was Owen Prescott's ex. She'd come to Coldwater all anonymous, pretending like she knew nothing about any of us, and it couldn't be a coincidence. Now I could see how she'd weaseled her way into my head just as easily as she had Xander's and Bryce's. There was no way it was by accident that we happened to be long-time friends of her ex.

I made an excuse to Xander and Bryce about needing to get home to check on my grandma. She didn't give a shit how late I got in, but now that I had this knowledge in my head, I had to figure out what to do with it. Maybe I should have told the guys right away, but it felt like hanging onto this juicy secret about Hannah-not-Jade gave me back some power again.

There was a better way to use this knowledge than to just tell my friends. No, I was hatching a plan, beating her at her

own sneaky little game. Jade Wells wouldn't know what hit her.

XANDER

The next time I walked into AP Physics class, Jade Wells was already in her usual seat, looking delectable in a low-cut black top and a flirty floral skirt that bared her smooth thighs. She noticed my arrival, and for some reason it stung a little when her expression went from relaxed to tense, angry. Remembering the way I left her all a mess in the locker room, I guess. Guilt shot through me even as I relished the mental image of her bare breasts streaked with my cum. Damn, but this girl confused me.

I abandoned my own usual spot at the front of the class to approach Jade toward the back of the room. I hovered over her desk, emphasizing my height in a satisfying show of power.

“Hi again, new girl,” I greeted her as if we were strangers. “Mind if I sit?”

Immediately, her posture stiffened, and other than the brief glare she shot me that told me I was *not* welcome to sit beside her, she tried not to react. Not a word left her pretty, full lips, and it made me want to laugh. She wasn’t as good at playing it cool as I was. From my seat beside her, I watched her jaw work with tension and noticed the edgy way she tapped her pencil on her desk. Satisfaction shot through me. I liked how easily I could affect her.

It wasn’t easy to see her sitting there and not remember how she looked when she sucked my cock, her green eyes watering as she took me deep into her throat, but I managed to hold it together. It was what I did best. I slid into my usual

haughty arrogance like a second skin, but as class got started, I found myself returning to that locker room in my mind instead of listening to our teacher setting up today's lab.

No matter the cold exterior I presented to the world—to myself, even, since the Townsends were all cold people and detached snootiness was in my blood—I *did*, unfortunately, have a conscience. And knowing that Jade was still pissed about my lack of aftercare actually bothered me. I wasn't one for cuddling or other such mushiness after sex. I'd hardly ever had any affection from my family, since my business-minded parents always made it clear they cared more about money than me. My older sister and I were more like accessories to them than family—just another status symbol. But no matter my reputation at this school, I'd never been so careless with any of my partners before Jade. At the very least, I'd never left a girl so pissed at me that she wouldn't acknowledge my existence after we'd fucked.

“We'll be assigning lab partners today,” Mrs. Parsons announced to the class, breaking me out of my uncharacteristic thoughts. “These will be your partners for the rest of the semester, so the two of you will have lots of opportunities to get to know each other. For the assignments, everyone please turn to the person next to you.”

Jade and I looked at each other. Her eyes grew wide. I resisted the urge to smile at her, knowing it would be unwelcome.

“Now, if anybody has a major issue with their lab partner, please come see me *after* class,” Mrs. Parsons continued in her chipper voice. “But for today, this is who you'll be working with on our experiment.”

“Don't worry, new girl,” I told Jade, unable to resist the urge to poke the bear. “I'm a straight-A student, so you're in good hands with me.”

She rolled her eyes at my subtle innuendo. I could tell she was annoyed at herself for acknowledging me when she spat out, “I have a four-point-oh, asshole. I don't need your help.”

Well, at least I knew my GPA was in good hands.

For the lab, we were making some sort of Rube Goldberg machine out of household objects. Something to demonstrate momentum or inertia or some other such nonsense I barely cared about because I was already mentally checked out of Coldwater and moving on to Harvard by now. Plus, this was clearly sweet Mrs. Parsons's attempt at making physics "fun", and I hadn't been born with an earnest excitable gene.

It was simple enough, at least, though Jade avoided looking at me as she worked. We were practically working individually, just at the same lab station. Eventually, though, her clear frustration with me manifested itself in her knocking over the plastic cup that was crucial to our contraption more than once. On the third toppling of our creation, she let out a harshly whispered, "*Damn it!*"

Mrs. Parsons wasn't the type to scold Jade, but she did wear a firm frown and acted like she wanted to come over and attempt some discipline. Jade Wells was being a bad girl, and the hornier parts of my brain loved it. I placated our teacher with a closed-lipped smile and turned back to my enraged lab partner.

"What's the problem, new girl? It's just a silly contraption." My bored tone would piss her off further, I knew, but maybe that was why I tried extra hard to sound like I didn't care even while I subtly asked after her wellbeing.

"Oh, my *God*," Jade half-growled, half-whispered. Her cheeks were flushed an adorable shade of deep, rosy pink that reminded me of her nipples, but the expression on her face was distraught enough to actually give my lust pause. She was trembling with rage when she spoke again after a long second of slow breathing through her nose.

"Actually, Xander, *you* are the problem. You've been nothing but an arrogant, self-important dick bag since we've met, and even though I'm clearly attracted to you, my hatred for you as a person has only increased a thousand times since you treated me like garbage after—well, you know. The locker room." She was blushing a furious fuchsia now, but she kept up her quiet tirade, almost whispering so as to not be

overheard by our classmates. I heard every syllable clear as day.

“I don’t care how fucking rich and handsome and smart you are. None of it matters if you treat the people around you like they don’t matter. It’s classless, and cruel, and fucking horrible. And maybe I’m used to that kind of uncaring treatment from guys I’ve dated, so that’s why I stupidly let myself get involved with you the way I did. I was swept up in the moment, and it felt good, and I’ve never been treated like I matter during sex, so why should things be any different now?”

Fuck, her voice was shaking now, too. She sounded like she was close to tears, and that vulnerable tidbit about her dating history struck a chord. Humanizing her, which I guess was her point—I’d never been a natural at seeing the people around me as real, full, complex individuals. I felt a painful twinge in my chest and idly rubbed my hand over the spot as if to soothe it. Jade wasn’t finished dealing her death blows, though.

“But I’ve learned my lesson now, and I’ll never touch any of you again. If you and your stupid friends just want to... to *use* me like some stupid toy, you’ve got the wrong girl. In fact, all three of you stooges can consider me erased from your lives. I’m done with this.”

The exhausted defeat in her voice, the slump of her shoulders once she’d finished talking, really solidified how fucking awful I felt. She looked so small, so helpless. Hopeless, even. And I didn’t like how that dulled the sparkle in her green eyes. I was starting to really like those eyes, and the sparkling personality underneath them, too.

The only thing I could manage to say, without a drop of irony, was, “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

Jade blinked and jerked backward in a motion that almost looked like she’d glitched. She stared at me, unblinking, silent. *Keep going, Xander. You’ve got to say more.*

“I was rude and terrible to you, and that’s how I’ve been since you’ve come to Coldwater. I can’t give you some excuse

about having a bad day, or a bad week, or a bad year. I'm just better at the perfectionism, keeping-up-appearances thing than I am at being... human. But—and I hate to admit this, really—something about you is intriguing enough to make me want to try. I so rarely want to get to know anyone, Jade Wells, but I'd like to get to know you, if you'd give me the chance to make things up to you.”

Her silence stretched on long enough that I almost worried she really had glitched. Fully frozen, needing a hard restart—and I'd love to press her power button, wherever that was. In front of a whole class of physics students, even. I didn't care.

Finally, Jade gave a slow, careful nod. It wasn't a complete acceptance, absolving me of my bad behavior, but it felt like a truce. And a perfect opportunity to put up a white flag.

“Come to my place after school,” I blurted out. I wasn't sure why I said it, wasn't sure of much of anything except that I needed to touch her, be touched by her again. “I may not be good with human warmth and affection in the socially-accepted sense, but I know how to make you feel good. You deserve to feel good after how I treated you.”

There was no innocence in her green irises, just an almost supernatural flame of desire that lit the same fuse inside me, too. She knew this was an invitation for sex—mind-blowing, explosive, go-all-afternoon sex, if she'd really let me make it up to her. I wanted to make Jade Wells come on my face, around my cock, every which way from Sunday. Dane was the imaginative, creative one of my friend group, but suddenly, a whole host of deliciously wicked ideas sprang to mind, and with it, I felt my dick spring to attention under our lab table. Jade inspired me in that way.

She didn't say yes, or nod, or do much to acknowledge my invitation but bite her lower lip in a way I made a mental note to try myself later. But she didn't say no, either. And that was all I needed to know that I'd be fucking Jade Wells into oblivion today. Whatever she wanted, I'd give her.

JADE

I'd blown past reckless and rounded the corner to fully batshit insane. Truly, that was the only explanation. Insanity would be a solid excuse for my sexual exploration with the school's infamous Triad of Terror, and it was the absolute only thing that made sense now that Xander had invited me over to his house, *clearly*, to have sex. No way that could be a serious offer. No way I was *actually considering it*, getting myself all hot and bothered on my way to the lunch room at the thought.

The craziest part of all of this was how far my revenge plot seemed to have strayed from my mind. Of course, Owen was still on my shit list, and I'd still relish the idea of his getting the comeuppance he deserved. I just knew that whatever I was doing with Dane Schwartz, Bryce Fisher, and Xander Townsend at this point had absolutely nothing to do with my silly plan. It had everything to do with pure, unadulterated lust. I'd never felt anything so strong before in my life.

Well, except the worry. Underneath the clouds of desire that filled my vision, I was terrified I'd get hurt again going down this path. No matter how much I told myself I hated Dane, Bryce, and Xander, part of me was starting to hate them less, and that meant I'd get my silly, naive heart broken again before too long.

The damn thing had terrible taste in guys.

As mine and Leah's normal table came into view and I headed that way, my overpriced designer lunchbox swinging

on my arm, the fog cleared enough for me to notice Dane leaving our table. My brow furrowed, and I thought about asking him what he was doing until he actually came close enough to me for us to speak. Before I could form a sentence, Dane made my blood run cold.

“Nice to see you, *Hannah*,” he practically sneered.

Oh, *shit*. Shit, shit, shit. Dane was gone in seconds, nowhere to be found, and then I was at the lunch table, and the look on Leah’s face told me exactly what had just happened. Somehow, Dane had found out my so-called secret identity. And now he’d broken the news to my only real friend at this school. Hell, after Owen ruined everything with my former friends, Leah was my only friend *period*.

“Hi,” I said with a wince as I came to sit across from her. *Please still be my friend. Please still be my friend.*

“Uh, hi, *Jade*. Or should I call you *Hannah*?” She raised an eyebrow, and I considered complimenting her on the perfect arch of it since I knew she’d been on an eyebrow journey lately, but I knew she wouldn’t let me off the hook that easily. She didn’t even flinch when my expression turned sheepish, apologetic.

“It’s definitely Jade now, okay? It’s my middle name. I needed a fresh start when I moved schools.”

“Yeah, about that,” Leah started, pointing a finger at me. “You said your school *closed*. But you went to that fancy private school, Worthington. I bet your parents aren’t out of the country, either. Do you even have an Aunt Lynette?”

“That part was true!” I hurried to clarify. “The, uh, the aunt part. My parents are still stateside, they just... don’t care what’s going on with me as long as my grades are good. I don’t know why I made that other stuff up, but I just... after what happened at my last school, I needed a fresh start, okay?”

“Have you been truthful about *anything*? Being my friend?”

“Of course, Leah,” I implored her, softening my expression and my voice so she’d know I really cared about

her. “You’ve been so awesome since the second I got here. I just... I came to this school for a specific reason, and it’s kind of complicated and weird, and I don’t know if you even want to know all the drama that goes into it.”

Leah laughed, taking me by surprise. “Girl, I *love* drama. Of course I want to know. If you give me all the tea, I *guess* I can forget about all the lies so far and we can start fresh. You’re brand new to the Leah life, anyway. It’s not like we’ve been besties for years under false pretenses.” She nudged my knee under the table, a friendly tease that instantly erased all of my anxiety.

“You really wanna know?” I asked her to be sure.

“Girl, if you don’t spill *right now*, I’m gonna kick your ass straight back to prep school.”

I cracked a weak grin. “Okay, but don’t judge me, alright?”

“Why? Is this about some dumb guy?”

I cringed. Leah let out a frustrated groan.

“I cannot *believe* this whole thing is for some stupid-ass man. And you give such strong boss bitch energy. But fine, fine! I’m not judging. Tell me everything.”

So I did. I told Leah how Owen had been my first serious boyfriend, how I’d given him my virginity and so much of my life, only for him to use my every vulnerability as ammo against me. Even before he cheated on me with my so-called friends, flaunting how easily he got away with it in front of all the jerks he hung out with, he was constantly putting me down. “*Hannah, you’re no fun.*” “*Hannah, why don’t you loosen up? My friends are just playing around.*” “*Hannah, babe, that outfit doesn’t work. You know I think you’re gorgeous, but there are gonna be lots of my friends at this party. Do you want to embarrass me?*”

Eventually, he stopped inviting me to stuff altogether—school events, parties, casual hangs with his friends. Anything in public, really. We saw each other on so-called date nights, which were always just the two of us, some dumb show on Netflix that Owen always picked, and mediocre sex. At the

time, he'd worn down my self-esteem to the point where I thought it was my fault. That I was too boring, too basic for him, and it was inevitable that he'd get bored of me. Even when it turned out to all be an attempt to hide his rampant, shameless cheating, it was hard to build myself back up to the point of realizing it wasn't my fault.

Now, of course, I knew who was to blame.

"Owen's from this area," I went on to tell Leah, who was listening less like a drama queen hungry for gossip and more like a kind and empathetic friend. The softness in her big brown eyes broke my heart a little, but it was used to being bandaged by now, and she deserved to know it all. I went on.

"He grew up with Bryce, Xander, and Dane. They've all been friends since childhood. So, coming to Coldwater... it was about getting away from my ex, obviously, not to mention all of my shitty former friends who slept with my boyfriend and trash talked me behind my back. Like, no way I could go back to Worthington after all of that blew up." I let out a dry laugh that wanted to be a sob, and Leah squeezed my hand on the table to give me strength. I continued, "but I picked Coldwater for a reason."

Leah thought for a second, then her eyes grew wide, and her mouth fell open. "No way, Jade. You're messing with the guys? What's the plan?"

"Revenge," I said simply. With a shrug, I explained, "My plan was just to get close to Owen's friends, flirt a little, and share it all over social media. I know he'd be pissed—even though he didn't really want me when we were together, he was always so jealous and possessive, always accusing me of flirting with other guys. So, fooling around with his friends would make him go ballistic. He'd hate the way it would look for his reputation, too—his ex getting with his public school friends. How embarrassing." I rolled my eyes.

The class divisions and snobbery at Worthington were next-level terrible. Even though Xander's family was even richer than Owen's, all of those private school kids I'd grown

up around saw the public school kids as pedestrian, beneath them.

“Beyond that, I don’t know. I had such high hopes coming here. Like maybe I could even turn Owen’s friends against him the same way he did to me.” The way he’d poisoned the female friendships in my life, even before the cheating, was Owen’s biggest crime. None of the girls ever wanted to hang out with the version of me Owen had turned me into.

“Hey, maybe you still could. Guys go a little crazy when a girl shows them attention sometimes. It’s pussy power,” Leah said in a wink-nudge tone that made me snort. “Seriously! I think it was smart to go full-on seductress. Like, those boys are hot as hell, so you might as well get something for yourself while you’re on your revenge quest.”

“But I didn’t mean to *actually* be attracted to them,” I grumbled. Leah raised an eyebrow at me again. This time, I did compliment her on it, but she was too absorbed in the drama to appreciate it fully.

“What, like it’s hard? Did you hear the part where they’re all *hot as hell*? I see nothing wrong with your getting properly laid. Think of it as your prize for winning the war against douchebag Owen.”

By the end of lunch, Leah was more focused on my little revenge plot than I was. She swore to keep my secret, even though I worried that ship had already sailed thanks to Dane, and she vowed to be my partner in crime as I continued to seek vengeance against my ex. That was wonderful, and I loved to feel that feminine solidarity again. But I was more focused on the other stuff she’d said.

Leah made a lot of sense. I could absolutely have my vengeance cake and lots of orgasms, too. After all my misery with Owen, mediocre sex and broken confidence and absolutely no fun, I deserved to have as much fun with Dane, Xander, and Bryce as I could. There was no reason I couldn’t doll out the pain I needed to inflict on Owen to heal myself of the injuries he’d given me, *and* nearly drown in pleasure at the

same time. That's what *Jade* deserved, and damn it, Hannah did too.

I deserve this, I told myself all afternoon as my body practically sang in anticipation. I repeated the mantra as the clock ticked closer and closer to the end of the day, closer and closer to when I'd be back at Xander Townsend's house, having my wicked way with him. *I deserve this*.

JADE

“**A**nd this is the basement,” Xander announced as we descended the stairs of his beautiful family home together.

“*Of course* even the basement is gorgeous,” I mumbled, and Xander let out a mild, sexy laugh.

“Fully soundproofed, too,” he told me. That was certainly convenient.

I was no stranger to rich people’s homes—I’d grown up in one, after all, though my parents weren’t quite as well-off as the Townsends. At the party I’d been too distracted by the people, the drinks, the drinking game, and eventually, Dane, to really notice the interior design. The basement was spacious and minimalistic in style, but somehow still cozy, with warm lighting and a huge sectional sofa that invited me to sink into its cushions. Since Mr. and Mrs. Townsend were not home, which seemed to be the norm, Xander was able to show me the highlights of the main floor before he led the way downstairs, too. We passed quickly through all the lovely, muted colors and expensive furniture that didn’t look lived-in. We knew the real reason I was here.

“I have a bedroom upstairs, but I spend most of my time down here, to be honest,” Xander told me as he crossed the large room to a fully-stocked bar. He brought me back a fancy sparkling water in a glass bottle, and I thanked him even though I thought sparkling water tasted like dish soap. He

didn't seem to notice me not drinking it, though, when he kept talking.

"My parents aren't particularly interested in family time, as I'm sure you could imagine. Just business, money, and schmoozing. So, I'm pretty much left to my own devices after all of my extracurriculars and community service work."

"Sounds lonely," I heard myself say.

Xander looked at me. The beauty of his blue eyes startled me every time, but in the basement, where he seemed to relax into himself, dropping the shiny veneer he wore at school, they were less frigid somehow, refreshingly cool summer swimming pools instead of the Arctic Ocean.

"Maybe," he admitted. He sipped his own sparkling water, deep in thought. "That's probably why my sister chose to go to school all the way across the country, to get away from the emptiness here. She goes to a school that's plenty prestigious, though, obviously. Townsends don't do state schools." He rolled his eyes, sipped his drink again. He almost seemed nervous.

"Do you miss your sister?" I asked, and I wasn't sure why I was so interested in learning about him now, except that he was so much softer here. I knew this was probably my only opportunity. Even the prospect of sex wasn't quite as alluring as solving the mystery of him.

"Yeah," he said flatly. He swallowed hard. "I do, sometimes. But we're not particularly close, either. Closeness isn't exactly the Townsend way."

And now I was feeling *sorry* for Xander. Sure, my parents were imperfect. They were snobby and status-hungry and far too obsessive about my being "perfect" for me to have grown up fully normal and well-adjusted about the idea of failure. But they did love me, and I had loving grandparents and my cool Aunt Lynette to boot. Xander gave off the energy of a storybook prince who had been trapped in a tower all his life. But instead of searching for his true love, he'd turned cold to cope. It made sense, at least.

“But enough about me and my shitty family.” Xander tried to laugh it off. He moved closer to me on the couch where we both sat, nudging my knee with his own. Then he laid his hand on my knee, warmth permeating my skin at the contact. I admired the slim elegance of his fingers, wondered if he’d ever played piano and assumed the answer was probably yes. There was a gorgeous grand piano upstairs, after all, and I almost wanted to ask him to play me something. Even though I knew where this was headed now, and I could already feel my core liquifying with want. Emotional closeness wasn’t his thing, perhaps, but physical closeness worked just fine for me right now.

“You’re not here for that, hmm?” Xander purred, sliding his hand further up my leg at a snail’s pace. He squeezed lightly, and I almost whimpered. But no, I had to play it cool. After the way he left things in the locker room, I couldn’t fall straight into trusting him. It would be like falling into a trap.

“I’m here for a sincere apology,” I told him, smiling a little from the side of my mouth. “Whatever that means to you.”

“This is what it means,” he breathed, and he leaned in to kiss me.

It was a slow movement, anticipation-building, the sound of his breath heightening my desire until I met him halfway. For some reason, maybe curiosity, I needed to move things along, get to the good part. But when our lips brushed, I knew this *was* the good part.

He was soft, sensual, the luxurious warm scent of him filling my senses. Surprisingly, there was something sweet and tender in Xander’s kiss, the gentle press of his lips, the softness of his breathing. Nothing like the cold face he usually wore. He parted his lips, encouraging mine to follow suit, with the sweetness of someone who worried they didn’t know what they were doing.

But he *did* know what he was doing, and that became more and more clear with each second, each tiny tinder of desire that sparked to life inside me. There was nothing fumbling or ungraceful in it even as the heat escalated. He kissed me like

he really was saying sorry, like he knew how to make it as lovely and heartbreaking as possible but also bring me to my knees—metaphorically this time. I leaned into him, tracing his lower lip with my tongue to savor his taste.

When I scooted closer, pressing my chest to his, Xander sighed through his nose. A relief, or more likely the building of his own desire. His beautiful pianist's hands began to roam, one of them coming up to lovingly cradle the back of my head, fingers weaving through my hair while the hand that had been on my knee moved up to grip my waist. His fingers dug in. He pulled himself closer, pulled me flush against his body, and I did one better and threw my leg over his thighs, pulling myself up into his lap.

I felt Xander's chest rumble under my hands. I tasted his laughter. He pulled back to look at me, his eyes flicking between my eyes and my lips, anticipating our next kiss. But he said, "I thought I was apologizing to *you*," in a sultry voice, and then he flipped us over.

It was a smooth movement, me ending up with my back on the sofa, Xander on top of me. His blue eyes glinted with desire, but before I could try to catch my breath or maintain some sort of banter, some illusion that I wasn't completely starstruck by him, he leaned back in and nipped at my earlobe with his teeth. I let out a yelp. Xander moved to kiss my neck right where it met my jaw, and I sighed.

The sensitivity of my neck, my collarbone, was something Xander could easily exploit with his expert mouth. I was happy to let him. He trailed kisses down the side of my neck and back up, drawing lovely shapes with the tip of his tongue that made every nerve in my body sing. When he found his way to my pulse point, he traced it, then gently sucked at the hollow of my throat, eliciting a quiet moan from my lips. He knew how to do it without leaving a mark, though the idea of his marking me had its own appeal, too. A souvenir of this moment. The perfect softness of it, even as I felt Xander's hardness against my thigh, needy and insistent, but patient.

He didn't linger very long at my throat, moving to free my breasts from my clothes, the stretched out neckline of my top

and lacy bralette providing some support, pushing them up into his eager face. Xander nuzzled between my breasts, breathing in deeply, cupping them in each of his hands like he was holding something precious. I squirmed, arching my back to encourage him, but he wouldn't be hurried. I was panting, on the verge of begging, when he finally swirled his tongue around my nipple.

All this teasing, the slow build up, had me feeling exquisitely sensitive. I cried out when he sucked my nipple into his mouth, tugged it gently against his teeth. He was a perfectionist even in this, stoking the flames of desire in me until I was on the verge of orgasm. Then, when he simultaneously bit down on one nipple while pinching the other with his skilled fingers, he actually tipped me over the edge. I cried out half in pleasure and half in surprise, bucking my hips involuntarily as I came. All of that and I was still fully clothed.

I was panting when Xander moved back up to kiss my neck, nuzzling again. God, he was so surprisingly sweet, and I couldn't help but stroke the fine hairs at the nape of his neck as he let me come down. My words were mostly air when I said, "Apology accepted."

I felt his laugh like a shiver, goosebumps rising over my skin despite his all-encompassing warmth above me. "Oh, that was just the start."

In another moment, his hands moved to start carefully undressing me. He kept his eyes on mine, asking for permission as he lifted my shirt up and over my head. I nodded frantically, suddenly desperate for it, and I moved to take his shirt off, too, undoing the buttons with shaking hands.

When I was fully naked and Xander was down to his boxer-briefs, he looked down at me, scanning every detail of my body, hip dips and faded stretch marks around my stomach and everything. He looked like he couldn't get enough, like he couldn't believe his luck.

"Perfect," he said simply. I flushed with satisfaction. Then Xander brought his lips back to my neck, trailing sweet kisses

from that sensitive spot down between my breasts, down the center of my abdomen, slowly moving toward my pussy. When I could feel his breaths against my slick folds, he stopped to breathe in the scent of me, nuzzling the blonde curls between my legs. “I knew you weren’t a natural redhead,” he muttered, and my laugh was cut off by a gasp when he pressed his open mouth to me.

Whereas Bryce had been feral, devouring me, Xander was more controlled in his efforts. He approached my pleasure like a mission he had to achieve, directing my thighs to spread wider to give him more room to work with. It was no less erotic. Something about his cool authority made me want to follow his every order, give him everything he wanted. I sighed when he enveloped my clit in his lips with a gentle, sucking kiss. I could already feel the pressure building in me again, a gentler orgasm than before, but no less world-shaking. I slowly undulated my hips against his mouth, savoring the slick friction. But Xander gripped my thighs hard, pinning me against the cushions.

“Stay still,” he ordered, and I moaned in acquiescence as he licked my clit slowly with the full flat of his tongue. Flexing that confident control again.

Xander ate me methodically, with an admirable single-minded focus that had me panting, grabbing my own nipples for some relief. “Please,” I begged him when he calmed his efforts, slowing his tongue. “Please, Xander. I need to come again.”

He hummed as if thinking it over, wondering if he should give me what I wanted. The sound shot waves of pleasure through my pussy, the soft vibration a tiny taste of what I needed. Even now, he was bullying me with the power of my own need. But then he decided I’d had enough. He licked me slowly from my entrance to my clit, then blew cool air over my sensitive flesh, making me whimper. He spoke roughly, “Then come for me, Jade. Right now.”

He sucked my clit again, lavishing his tongue over the livewire tip. *Fuck*. At his command, I broke apart, bucking my hips involuntarily as my tension became unbearable. I swear, I

stopped breathing for far too long as I rode out the orgasm, panting and trying not to scream.

“Let me hear you,” Xander told me, his voice rough. “I want to hear you every time you come. Soundproof, remember?”

“I—I need more,” I half-sobbed, and Xander sprang into action, moving up to kiss me hard on the mouth, the tang of my juices drawing a moan from my lips that he swallowed down eagerly. He spoke against my mouth.

“Are you on the pill?” he asked hurriedly. His erection, still covered by his underwear, pressed insistently against my stomach. God, he was so long. I couldn’t wait to feel him deep inside me.

“Yes,” I answered. “And I’m—I’m clean. I was tested before...”

Before Bryce. Xander nodded like he knew that was safe—they’d been friends long enough, he probably *did* know about Bryce’s STI status. The fact that he had no qualms about sleeping with me after Bryce did said a lot about their friendship about the strange dynamic I’d formed so quickly with my ex’s best friends. Xander spoke in my ear, nipped at my jaw with his teeth. “I’m tested regularly and I’m perfectly healthy. Maybe it’s some stupid male competitiveness, but after Bryce got to have you raw, I’ve got to have the same. I won’t accept anything but the best.”

God, it made such perfect sense for him that I let out a breathy laugh. He stopped my amusement with a hard, serious look. “Please, Jade. I need to know how it feels to come inside you. I *need* to fuck you raw.”

“Yes,” I gasped when he slowly ground his hips against me. I needed it just as badly as he did, the warmth of his skin against mine, no barrier between our bodies as he thrust into me. Unable to wait any longer, I reached for him, helped him pull off his underwear so we were fully skin to skin. Just the sight of his dick made my mouth water, remembering sucking him in the locker room, but I needed him deep in my pussy this time. I helped him guide his head to my entrance, and then

Xander thrust inside, all the way to the hilt, the wetness from my two orgasms making it easy despite his size. I cried out. I could feel him so deep within me that I shuddered, anticipating coming again already.

“Yes,” I gasped out as he pulled out part-way and then thrust back inside, hitting my G-spot perfectly. I wrapped my arms around Xander’s neck as he started to find a rhythm for his hips, methodical and precise as always. He buried his face against my neck as he fucked me, and I gripped his nape, my other hand mussing his usually-perfect hair.

I could feel our heartbeats thumping erratically in time with one another, feel and hear our mingled breaths heating the air. Xander kept up a punishing pace, slamming into me in a way that would have been ungraceful if anyone else had been doing it. But he was never an animal even when he fucked like it was his job, always maintaining an air of dignity, a sexy, possessive power he wielded over my body to delicious ends. My thighs cradled his narrow hips perfectly, my inner muscles squeezing around his cock, and I pulled him closer with my legs, wrapping him up and crossing my ankles to hold him inside me. Xander swore in my ear, but even that sounded proper somehow. He gripped my ass for leverage with both hands as he continued pounding into my swollen, wanton flesh.

“I need you to come again,” he half-growled into my ear before he kissed me hard on the mouth and tangled my tongue with his. The luscious warmth of him was so intoxicating, I was almost dizzy, and I wasn’t sure his demand was something I could accommodate. But then Xander adjusted his angle and speed so he was striking directly on my G-spot, the inner pool of desire within me overflowing until I had no choice but to shout.

“Fuck, *Xander!*” I sobbed, feeling tears of perfect agony sliding down my cheeks. The force of his thrusts was something I’d feel echoes of forever, my poor vibrator insufficient in comparison. “Yes, God, yes. I wanna come again. I *need* you to come inside me.”

“You’re going to get it, baby,” he said, panting. “You’re gonna come all over my cock, and your sweet pussy is gonna drip with my cum. Come for me, Jade.”

He thrust into me almost violently once, twice, three times, and then his wish was my body’s command. I could feel yet another delicious peak wracking through my entire self, taking me by surprise. I screamed, putting the basement soundproofing to good use as I rode out the bone-shaking orgasm with my own clumsy thrusts, my inner muscles milking Xander’s cock until he joined me over the edge with a sharp intake of breath, restrained and dignified to the end. The liquid heat of his cum inside me was pure perfection. I never wanted to be empty again, wanted to always be full of this power and heat.

In the catching-our-breath aftermath of it all, the heat dulled to a sweet, satisfying warmth that made me want to curl into Xander’s side. He adjusted us, needing to be in charge even in this, so that he was lying against the back cushions and I was snuggled into his chest, his long arms protective and comforting around my torso. I pressed soft kisses to the fine hair on his chest, right above his heart.

I’d crossed yet another line with these boys, now. I never would have expected this kind of behavior from myself, especially after Owen’s callousness after sex had trained me to expect that same detachment with others. Sex almost had no appeal to me at a certain point after the break-up, but after experiencing it anew with Bryce and now Xander—and hell, even the fooling around Dane and I had done in the pool house, even though we hadn’t gone all the way—I could hardly even remember my sex life before. Was this how it was for everyone? Somehow, I doubted it.

“Thank you,” I told Xander softly, kissing his jaw before I nuzzled back against his sternum, hiding my face. “That was... that was so much better than I even expected. I’ll never forget this.”

“Me neither,” he admitted. It was such a sweet admission, so unlike the ice king he’d been when we first met. Could that really have been so recent? It felt like time had sped forward

to a new, more exciting future the second I'd gotten involved with these guys. "I... you've surprised me, new girl."

"A good surprise?" I whispered, biting my lip to hide my smile.

"The best," he confirmed. A pause where I could tell we were both remembering where we'd started. Xander's cruelty, my disdain for everything he stood for. And he didn't even know about the ulterior motive that had drawn me to him and his friends to begin with, though I was big enough to admit that sleeping with him now was entirely for my pleasure outside of my need for revenge. Honestly, what good was revenge if it didn't come with this beautiful moment, the safety and comfort I felt in Xander's arms?

"You surprised me, too," I told him quietly. "Your sincerity. The kindness I'm not sure anyone else at Coldwater gets to see."

We both stilled, but I didn't feel Xander pull away. If anything, he held me tighter to him, relishing this closeness he clearly was lacking elsewhere in his life. The magic of human touch—Aunt Lynette always told me it had healing powers, and maybe it did. It had healed the rift between Xander and me, anyway.

Xander breathed in the scent of my strawberry shampoo and sighed. His voice came out a little sleepy but perfectly coherent when he spoke again.

"I'm sorry," he whispered against my hair. "I'm sorry."

But in the perfect serenity of his arms, the afterglow of his apology, I couldn't even remember why I should be mad at him anymore.

BRYCE

”Dane, dude, you wanna tell me what the hell is going on? This cryptic shit would piss me off if I wasn’t in such a good mood.”

“I told you already,” Dane snapped. “I’m not saying until we’re with Xander, too. This affects all of us.”

“Whatever, weirdo.” I brushed him off, whistling along to the annoying melody of the pop song on the radio just to bug Dane more.

After football practice, I was tired, but amped up at the same time. I was ready to run, the hot shower I’d taken having soothed my tired muscles but done nothing to dull my excited energy. Practice had gone so well today, and I knew we’d dominate in the homecoming game. So it was with an eager optimism that I was driving us both to Xander’s house, as usual, though there was nothing *usual* about the fidgety tension Dane had brought into the car.

When we met after I got out of practice, Dane told me he had to talk to us—Xander and me both—about something important, and I wasn’t exactly known for my patience, but even his annoying ass couldn’t dull the football high. Considering he was the least talkative of our little crew, though, Dane wanting to talk at all was weird. The idea of Dane having to discuss something serious was just plain bizarre, though. Every passing moment only had my brain spinning off wilder and wilder scenarios.

Part of me guessed—or rather knew—that it had to have something to do with Jade. She was the only real change in our lives recently, and the most exciting one to boot. We were all a little obsessed. Funny how some good pussy could shake things up so thoroughly.

I parked a little crookedly in front of Xander’s palatial house, and I slammed the door when I climbed out. I waved a hand for Dane to follow me inside, barging through the front door as we always did. Mr. and Mrs. Townsend were so rarely home, and Xander never bothered with arming the security system or making us knock to get inside. We’d even joked before that they should just install some kind of mega-slide outside that went straight to the basement so Dane and I wouldn’t have to track dirt through Mrs. Townsend’s perfect home.

“Xan!” I called as we trounced down the basement stairs. “We’re here, and Dane’s being fuckin’ weird!”

Dane acted like he wanted to fight me on this point—and he knew he’d lose, since I had several inches and close to 100 pounds on him, which only augmented the fact that I was *right*—but we both stopped short when we reached the main living area of the basement and Xander wasn’t alone.

Jade Wells was sitting beside him on the sofa, snuggled up against his side like that was totally normal. There was a fuzzy blanket thrown over their laps, and I could have sworn Jade was wearing one of Xander’s shirts, too—an oversized shirt advertising the country club to which his father belonged. Her legs were tucked up underneath her, shrouded in the blanket, so I couldn’t see what was going on downstairs, but I just *knew* she was pantsless under there. And damn if that didn’t make my mouth water. I wondered if she had on panties...

“What the fuck?” Dane broke the momentary silence, giving voice to my exact thoughts. “What’s *she* doing here?”

“Call me crazy, Dane, but I think we can both assume what she’s doing here,” I piped in, bouncing my eyebrows so he’d really know what I meant. “That looks like freshly-fucked hair, if I’m not mistaken. Nice job, Xan.”

“I didn’t know you guys were coming,” Xander said in a tone that was as close to sheepish as he got. He stood up from the couch, putting himself between us and Jade. At least he was covered—no shirt, but some gray sweats hung low on his slim hips. These two had definitely boned.

“Yeah, well, I had something important to tell you guys,” Dane spoke up, and maybe it was just my constant awareness of Jade Wells, but I could have sworn the air shifted as she tensed like she was getting ready to run. Dane looked at Jade, narrowing his eyes as he spoke. “Our little new girl isn’t who she says she is. She’s fucking *Hannah*. Like, Owen’s Hannah.”

Silence fell like a dark curtain. Jade winced, biting her lower lip in a way that would have been adorable if my head wasn’t spinning. I waited for her to deny it. For the details to fall into place, make this all start making sense.

“I don’t understand,” I said quietly.

We’d never met Owen Prescott’s ex-girlfriend before, even when she wasn’t yet an “ex”, but we’d all heard stories about her. Owen complained enough about her being a fun-sucker that we all assumed she was some bland, stuck-up princess type Owen had no business dating in the first place. We all knew Owen had cheated on her frequently, too. Every party where our worlds collided with his, he’d have a new chick on his arm, talking to us all with a wink-nudge attitude like he was proud to be getting away with it.

My friends and I weren’t saints, but I knew we’d all gotten bad vibes from it. It was a big part of the reason we didn’t hang out with Owen as much as we once did. I’d gotten used to our friend group being just Xander, Dane, and me these days. Well, Xander, Dane, me, and recently, Jade. *Hannah*.

“She changed her name and moved schools after she and Owen broke up,” Dane went on to explain, his tone cold. “She’s been playing us. Getting close to us in some... some fucked-up attempt to get back at Owen.”

“It’s not like that,” Jade said softly, and all six of our eyes snapped to her. Slowly, she pulled herself off the couch and stood up, coming closer to us. Her bare legs were just as

smooth and curvaceous as I remembered from when they were around me in the locker room. But shit, if this was all a plot to get back at Owen fucking Prescott, that painted the locker room in a brand new light.

“You used me,” I said, incredulous and hurt. The betrayal stung like venom under my skin. Could she have been faking everything, all the pleasure and sweetness she showed to me when we fucked? How could she fake that? I’d seen and felt her with my own eyes, and I knew when a woman was aroused beyond sense, unable to control herself around me. Jade Wells would have to be a goddamn professional actress to convince me.

“You came to the locker room just to... to what? Fuck with me because I’m close to Owen? That’s fucking twisted. Who has sex with someone with an ulterior motive?” I bit out the words with a subtle husk to my voice, emotion welling up inside me.

“No!” Jade hurried to say, coming closer to me. I didn’t shake her off when she pressed a consoling hand to my chest, but it was a near thing. “No, Bryce, I swear to God that’s... that’s not what happened. I didn’t even plan to sleep with you. It just... happened.”

“Or me, I gather,” Xander added dryly. His eyes were ice cold. “This wasn’t all some sick attempt to get back at the guy who cheated on you? Fuck his friends as revenge?”

“No,” she said, her voice cracking. She looked at Dane. “Fuck, you guys. I didn’t... I wasn’t planning to sleep with any of you.”

“Well, good thing you just fucked around with me,” Dane said with cold sarcasm. “No harm done, huh, princess?”

“You’ve—you guys have got it all wrong,” she said, and the shake in her voice told me there were tears threatening. It could have been another manipulation tactic, but Jade seemed to understand that we wouldn’t fall for it so easily this time. She stepped back, separating herself from the three of us. I missed her touch, but I ignored that stupid fact and tried to

regain my composure. “I can explain, if you’ll just... give me a minute to do that.”

Dane rolled his eyes, scoffed. Xander remained silent, crossing his arms over his chest. Maybe I was the dumbest one of the three of us, the naivest and too trusting, but I couldn’t dismiss her so easily. I gave Jade a slow nod that she watched with clear wonder in her bright green eyes.

“I want to hear what you have to say,” I said finally. “No guarantees you’re off the hook, but I’ll at least get the story. Better make it a good one, new girl.”

I watched Jade’s throat move as she swallowed hard. Watched her look at each of us, gauging whether Dane and Xander had any interest in hearing her story. Xander gave her a careful nod, and Dane shrugged, and that must have been enough for her.

“I... I did come to Coldwater because of Owen,” Jade explained. I refused to think of her as Hannah—she’d introduced herself as Jade for a reason, and though I didn’t yet know what it was, I couldn’t so easily flip that switch in my brain. She took a deep breath. “And... I did try to get close to you guys as part of a stupid plot for revenge. I’ll admit that, okay? And I know it’s stupid and a little fucked up, but you guys don’t know just how badly Owen treated me. It felt like the only way to get some power back for myself.

“You guys are friends with him, and I know that. When I was dating Owen, I think I was almost jealous of what you guys had with him.” She let out a humorless laugh, ran her hand nervously through her hair. “Owen was my first real boyfriend, alright? He’s so handsome, and charming, and he *runs* Worthington Academy. You guys probably know that even though you never went to school there. He’s got this... confidence, I guess it is. Or at least that’s what I thought it was before I realized it was just privilege and arrogance and a complete disregard for other people’s feelings all mixed together in a terrible fucking smoothie of garbage.”

I barked a laugh, and though Dane kept his pissed-off mask in place, even Xander surprised us all by letting out a

tiny hiss of a laugh through his nose.

“Eloquently put,” he teased her, and Jade cracked a weak smile before she went on.

“I was always... I don’t know. I felt a little like I never quite fit in, even with all of my friends. Dumb teenage girl shit, I guess—like, I wasn’t as interested in shopping and handbags and expensive skincare as them, and my parents were always so strict about my doing well in school, so I couldn’t skate by like the usual rich, pretty girls. It’s probably at least a little bit because I’m not a size two like all the other perfect girls at my old school, too.” She shrugged, and I resisted the urge to refute her self-deprecating comment, tell her that the luscious curves she teased us with daily were perfect, cellulite and stretch marks and all. The way her ass could fill out a pair of tight jeans, the succulent plumpness of her thighs, the way her full breasts bounced when she rode my dick... Christ, it could drive me to distraction even as I was trying to hear her out. I forced my dick to calm down so I could learn more about the mysterious Hannah-Jade. There was something novel about the idea of uncovering her secrets the same way I’d uncovered her body already.

“Owen is like the *king* of Worthington. So when he noticed me, plain old nothing-special Hannah... it was hard to resist, I guess. I never saw any red flags when he started being nice to me and offering me gifts and *wooing* me like some kind of fairytale prince. It just felt so perfect.

“For a while, we were happy. I... I gave Owen my virginity,” she admitted with red cheeks, “and I think I maybe thought we’d get married someday. I know that’s stupid to think in high school, but I did. Until everything fell apart, anyway.”

Jade stayed strong as she told us about the slow deterioration of their relationship. From being around Owen for years, seeing the way he treated girls even when we were kids, I could sense the truth in every word she spoke. How he’d started to reveal his critical, unkind nature, at first in small comments about her body or her personality, and

eventually by disinviting her to things his girlfriend definitely should have been allowed to attend.

“I was so stupid,” Jade said shakily, tears actually welling up in her eyes now. “I should have known he was cheating on me way sooner, but I think I ignored all the signs because... well, honestly, because I didn’t want to believe that of my former friends, either. All the girls who had let me into their inner circle, invited me to their sleepovers and to get ready with them for school dances... they’d only started to like me when Owen noticed me, anyway. He gave me all of my friends, and then he took them away.” A glittering tear rolled down her cheek and fell onto the smooth carpet.

Jesus, I couldn’t imagine what that felt like. I’d never been as alone as Jade Wells was before she came to Coldwater, having grown up with great parents, all of my siblings, and three close friends to boot. All of those bonds had been rock-solid, formed at such an early age that they were built into who I was, the sturdy foundation of Bryce Fisher. I resisted the urge to go to Jade, wrap her up in my arms, and take the pain away because I knew I should still be upset with her despite her sad story. Dane was the one with the real temper, though, and I’d never been very good at holding a grudge. My resolve was crumbling with every passing second, and she hadn’t even gotten to the real explanation yet.

“So when we finally broke up, I couldn’t stand to face him again. I moved schools, and when I decided on Coldwater, it wasn’t just because my aunt lives in the district. I knew you guys went there, and I... I guess I thought the best way to give Owen a taste of his own medicine, to make him feel some fraction of the hurt he inflicted on me, was to go through his friends, too.

“But Jesus, I never, *ever* intended to... to actually be attracted to you guys. I promise I wasn’t faking any of that, and I think you all know it. I wouldn’t even know how to convincingly fake an orgasm, anyway, since Owen never cared whether I came or not. My vibrator was practically worn out by the end of our relationship. ”

That was the comment that finally broke Dane's near-impenetrable walls, too. He let out a cruel laugh—at Owen's expense, I knew, since he and Owen had never been as close to begin with.

"I just wanted to flirt with you guys," Jade admitted carefully. She played with her hair, twirling an end around her finger in a nervous habit. "I... honestly, I didn't think it all through as well as I could have, but my plan was basically just to get close to you, flirt a little, take some photos I could share online to make him see what it was like. I know Owen still keeps track of that kind of shit, not because he cared about me or anything but because he's still pissed I had the nerve to break up with him. Asshole," she scoffed, and Dane laughed a little again, adding something like "tell me about it" under his breath.

"I don't know when or how I got so distracted by... by my feelings for you guys," Jade went on. Her cheeks were bright pink, and she avoided our eyes. "Sexual feelings, obviously. I still don't really know if I like any of you as people all that much. You guys are... well, you're total bullies. People at school are *afraid* of you. You walk around like you own the damn place, and you were dicks to me the second we met even though you *didn't* know who I was. Honestly, I kind of hate myself for being so attracted to the three of you and for acting on it. It's like I haven't learned my lesson at all after stupid fucking Owen Prescott."

Dane bristled at the comparison, and somehow, my reaction was the opposite. I felt myself deflate like a sad balloon, realizing how right she was. Sure, I knew I wasn't always the nicest guy in school, but before Jade, I'd never taken a second to consider how my actions could really hurt people. How projecting my own issues with my older brothers, my secret insecurities, onto the weaker kids around me wasn't harmless or fair. Xander, Dane, and I all had rough edges, and of the three of us, I had less excuse to be such a jerk. Sure, I had problems like anyone, but Dane came from a hellish childhood and Xander's family treated each other like reluctant business colleagues instead of loving relatives. My mom and dad had raised me right, at least.

“I’m nothing like that prick,” Dane spat at Jade, and she stood her ground.

“You are, though. You guys belittle me just as much as he did, at least in public. But the difference is that you all made me feel sexy, and wanted, and I guess cared for in some way, even if that was only in the context of sex. That’s important to me, and no matter how little I like you guys as people in public, I love the way you make me feel when we’re alone.”

I swallowed hard, taking the silence to mean she was finished with her explanation. The words that came out of my mouth were involuntary, but they felt right. “I’m... so sorry, Jade. For the bullying shit, I mean.”

I took a few slow steps toward Jade, not stopping until I was looking down into her face, cupping her cheek in my palm. Her bright green irises were suspicious, but there was a sweet hope in them, too. I stroked her cheek with my thumb, carrying away one of her residual tears.

“There’s no excuse for being such an asshole to you, or to anyone, really. So, I won’t try to make you feel bad for me with some sob story about why I need therapy or whatever.” I cracked a smile when she let out a breathy little laugh. “But really, Jade. I wanna be a better dude. I never, ever want to be like Owen. We’ve... noticed the change in him over the years, too. And from what you’ve said... I don’t blame you for wanting to get revenge.”

She blinked at me, and her eyes grew wide. Xander and Dane were quiet as she looked between them, then back at me. “What... what are you saying?”

“I’m saying,” I started slowly, measuring my words with more care than I ever used in anything else. This mattered to me. I was making a choice I knew I’d never regret. “That I don’t care if you were trying to use me at first. It sounds like your ex deserves everything he’s got coming to him, and I don’t regret what happened in the locker room. Now, you’ve got me on your hook, Jade Wells. And if you want to fuck over Owen... hell, I’m ready to follow you into battle.”

JADE

”Just like that?” I asked Bryce, disbelief coloring my tone. “You’d... jump ship from this friendship you’ve had so long just to help me?”

“Well, to help you, *and* to make sure I get to fuck you again,” he clarified with a cheeky grin. “Assuming that’s still on the table. Somehow, I doubt you got enough of Bryce from just the one time.”

I laughed hard, slapping him on the chest in playful consternation as he grinned back at me and bobbed his eyebrows like a freak. He wasn’t wrong, though. Even being in close proximity to his large, delicious body while I was so skimpily dressed was tempting me to touch him again. But my mind was still struggling to grasp this sudden change in allegiance.

“I’ve already apologized to you,” Xander then chimed in, strolling toward me with his arms still crossed over his bare chest. He stopped when he and Bryce were shoulder-to-shoulder, looking down at me with those coolly beautiful eyes. “But now, knowing what all went into your dumping Owen and moving to Coldwater, I’m inclined to take your side, too.”

“You are?” I parroted back.

“Sure. He and I have been growing apart regardless.” He shrugged, flipped a strand of his hair off his forehead. “I’d much rather be on the side of the scorned woman than some asshole with no sense of loyalty.”

It made sense that loyalty would matter so much to Xander, who had kept the same two best friends all his life. He had such shaky, weak connections with his family members, I could see now that Dane and Bryce were more family to him than the other stuck-up Townsends. This made me feel like I was part of their little family somehow, too, and though I knew that was ridiculous, I couldn't quite shake the feeling that I belonged here with the three of them.

"Honestly, I never really liked that son-of-a-bitch," Dane said, then. He strode over, even his fiery anger fading now in the aftermath of my sad story. He came to stand at Bryce's other shoulder, nearly a full head shorter than his friends, though no less dazzling for it. But instead of falling in line, he reached for me, pulling me toward him by my wrist so I was in front of him, my chest almost touching his.

"I always hung out with Owen because he was friends with Xander and Bryce, but I got a bad feeling from that guy from jump. What he did to you was fucked up. I'm on board for ruining his privileged life in whatever way we can, especially if that means I get to touch you again." He side-eyed his two friends, then smirked as he met my eyes with his own. The depths in those dark brown irises shocked me.

"You didn't apologize for being such a dick to me, though," I pointed out. A little bit of a reminder for myself, too—I couldn't cave, expose *all* of my vulnerabilities, with the three of them. We may be tentative allies at this moment, but we weren't really friends. There wasn't enough trust for that, yet.

"And I'm not going to," he said, which gave me pause until he continued. "I don't believe in apologies unless they're sincere, and I can't apologize for the way that I am." He shrugged, but the sweet, tortured look on his face told a different story. He cared more than he was letting on. This felt like a confession of his low opinion of himself more than a refusal to be kind to me, and my stupid, misguided heart broke a little bit at that realization. His hand was gentle when he placed it on the back of my neck, and the soft, cherishing possession in it broke my heart a little bit more.

“I like you, Jade, against my better judgment. I don’t actually fucking care enough about your lies to not want you anymore. And the really fucking wild thing is that I care whether you like *me*. But you need to know that I’m not the nice guy you’ve probably dreamed about, not even underneath it all. I’m not the type to buy you roses or whatever shit a lot of girls look for, alright? But I’ll stick up for you against dickheads like Owen, and I’ll always stick by my friends, too. Plus,” he said, taking a pause to shock me with a surprise kiss, passionate and promising more. He spoke quietly when he pulled away. “If you’re up for it after everything, I’ll give you everything you want and more in bed. I can guarantee you that.”

Was that really all it took for my body to sing to life, transform into a live wire of arousal? With just that reminder of Dane’s sexual prowess, I could already feel the wetness, the gentle heartbeat between my legs that made me squirm and shuffle back and forth on my feet. He was the reason I could now understand the appeal of bad boys.

Or was I really just in denial about how I’d been on the precipice of lust since the second all three of these guys were in the same room as me at the same time? There was too much tension, standing there with the three of them. Too much unresolved fantasy, staring right at me in a perfectly private, soundproofed basement—Dane’s dark woods brown, Bryce’s golden amber, and Xander’s frozen lake blue.

The perfect combination.

“Does this mean you boys are down to help me thoroughly destroy Owen Prescott, then?” I asked, not hiding the sultry rasp in my voice, the implication of where this revenge plot could take us.

“Depends on what that entails,” Xander replied.

“I’m down for whatever,” Bryce chimed in cheerily. “But I have to say, with all four of us working on it together, I think we can do better than a little FOMO on social media.”

“Might as well hit him where it would *really* hurt,” Dane practically purred. He pulled me to him, surprising me into a

tiny yelp that made all three of the guys laugh. “If you’re going for revenge, what better way to get back at your ex than by fucking *all* of his best friends?”

“What, at the same time?” I laughed, but the serious silence that greeted me told me there was nothing funny about it. My pulse quickened with excitement, trepidation, and God knows what else. They couldn’t be serious, could they?

“Hold on.” Bryce stopped the crazy train in its tracks, holding up one of his huge bear-paw hands. “First of all, I’m on board for fucking you again as revenge, Jade, but I just need to emphasize that I want you regardless. Scheme or no scheme, you’re sexy as hell, and I’ve been dreaming about that pussy nonstop. So yeah, I’m not just doing this for the wrong reasons.”

God, would I ever stop blushing at the things Bryce said to me? He was shameless in his flirting, his dirty talk, his constant praise that I was starting to realize was kind of my kink.

“Let’s be real, this is more about me wanting to fuck you than it is about your shitty ex,” Dane agreed. “But if you can kill two birds with one stone, why the hell not? Feels right.”

Xander nodded. “You didn’t think this afternoon was going to be a one-time thing, did you, Jade? Because I know we both want more than that, and I see no reason to deny ourselves the pleasure.”

“Wow.” I laughed, looking at each of their serious faces in turn. “Imagine how pissed Owen will be when he sees how much good dick I’m getting. Talk about being better off without him.”

“I don’t want to think about him right now,” Dane growled into my ear. “I just want to be inside you, finally. Will you let me fuck you, right here in front of my friends? Seems like a good way to prove you’re not in this just to spite your ex.”

My heartbeat was running away, now. Too much excitement. I worried it would thump its way right out of my chest. I looked at Bryce and Xander even as Dane started to

kiss my neck, a question in my eyes before it graced my lips. “Would you... would *all* of you want that?”

As if in answer, Bryce came to my side and gently moved the hair off my neck. He leaned in to kiss my jaw on the opposite side of where Dane was, and I sighed at the perfect completeness of it. Being cocooned in between their two bodies... was this heaven?

Before my eyes could flutter closed in pleasure, I let my gaze wander until I found Xander, still a step or two away from the rest of us. He made no move to come closer. Instead, he just watched the three of us with a cool, impassive expression that may have convinced someone else, but after getting to know him so intimately this afternoon, it didn't fool me in the slightest. His eyes were locked onto the scene with rapt attention, his body tensed as if to pounce, and I could have sworn I saw the stirring of his cock underneath the front of his gray sweatpants. My lips parted in pleasure as Dane scraped his teeth over the place where my neck met my shoulder, and then I felt Bryce's hand come up to cup my breast. I let out a gasp.

“Undress her.” Xander's commanding voice broke through the moment. My eyes widened with the realization that he was taking control of the scene from the outside, not directly involving himself yet. The idea of his giving us orders, posing me like his little fuck doll... it shot a bolt of heat straight to my core.

Bryce obeyed the order, a team player until the very end. He grabbed a handful of Xander's shirt fabric and pulled it up, exposing my ass and pussy to the air. Dane swore quietly as he pulled back to help, and when I was fully naked, standing in front of them, the three guys took a long moment to drink in the sight.

“Goddamn, baby,” Bryce said first, his voice awed and quiet. “You're something out of a fantasy.”

“She is, isn't she, boys?” Xander spoke coolly from behind us. He took a few steps back as if to give himself a better view of the whole tableau, his eyes trailing their way from my face

down to my peaked nipples, my lust-swollen labia. He licked his lips, and I let out a tiny whimper, remembering the way his tongue had teased me into a frenzy just a couple of hours before. “Dane, tell her how fucking delicious she looks.”

“Good enough to eat,” Dane rasped. He locked his eyes on the flushed heat between my legs too, enthralled by it. “I can already see you’re soaking wet for us. An insatiable little slut, aren’t you?”

I felt myself blush a deep scarlet, unable to hide it as the color reached every inch of my exposed skin. Xander’s voice was sharp when he said, “Answer him, Jade.”

“Y–yes,” I stammered, looking into each of their eyes and landing finally on Dane’s. “I’m... I’m so wet for you. All of you.”

“Say the words, Jade. Tell us what a dirty little slut you are. Tell us what you want.” Xander’s voice didn’t waver. Dane looked at me as if to say, *You heard him.*

“I’m—I’m a dirty little slut,” I half-whispered, and though there was some humiliation in it, it was overridden by a wave of deep satisfaction. I was nearly out of breath when I said, “And I want you guys to fuck me all at the same time.”

That seemed to set things into motion. With a nod from Xander that revealed how the three of them could work as a well-oiled machine together, Bryce picked me up, throwing me over his shoulder like I weighed nothing. I felt my wetness brush his chest, the warmth of his skin nearly scalding my sensitive flesh. I yelped, and Dane reached over to smack my ass, which turned the sound into a moan. Bryce practically threw me onto the sofa—the same one where I’d slept with Xander alone not long ago—and Dane came to stand over me.

“I’ve been waiting for this,” he said as he undid his belt, his strong hands making quick, aggressive work of it. I jumped when the buckle clattered against the floor. Bryce stripped off his shirt and then moved to sit on the sofa by my head, adjusting us so that my head was lying on his lap. It was hard to know where to look. Dane had peeled off his own shirt and was undoing his pants now, stripping down to the black

underwear that was struggling to contain his erection. If I turned my head, I'd be faced with Bryce's dick, too, fully clothed but no less tempting for it. Xander took a seat in a chair across the room, enjoying the view.

"Not so fast, Dane," Xander spoke up when Dane started to shed his final item of clothing. "You can't just leave her pretty pussy untouched like that. Spread her legs." He even snapped his fingers, urging Dane to hurry.

Dane smirked down at me, pulling my legs apart so that one of them hung off the sofa, the other going up to hook over the back of it. I was completely exposed, spread out like a feast for them, and I loved it. He then came to kneel on the sofa before me, settling himself between my spread thighs.

"Don't need orders for this part, Boss," Dane mumbled to Xander as he laid his hands on either side of my pussy, framing it before he leaned in close enough to taste me. He stopped, letting me feel his breath against my wetness, sending goosebumps down my legs. "I've been wanting to eat this sweet pussy since you first walked into Coldwater High."

"It *is* sweet," Bryce grunted, smoothing back my hair from my face. "Ain't that right, Xan? Sweetest thing in the world, our Jadie."

Ours. That affectionate, claiming term made me feel owned, cherished by these three men. I sighed, relaxing further into the couch cushions.

"Enough dawdling," Xander snapped. "Dane, make her come on your tongue before you fuck her. I want to watch her fall apart."

"Yes, sir," Dane muttered sarcastically, but he leaned in to lick me, unable to resist his own desire.

When his tongue barely met the outer rim of my entrance, my hips bucked involuntarily, shocking me with my own wantonness. I was so keyed up from the anticipation, the presence of these three sexy men, that just the gentlest attention felt like a spark. Dane hummed in satisfaction, licking slowly all the way up to my clit, but instead of giving

attention to the swollen nub, he traced around the edges, making me twitch and squirm. Bryce sighed, watching Dane eat me out as his hand still stroked my hair. I wanted him to touch me more. I gasped when Dane blew his cool breath over my clit.

“More,” I let out on a moan. “I need more.”

“Grab her tits, Bryce,” Xander commanded. “Make yourself useful.”

Taking the directive to heart, Bryce pawed my right breast almost desperately, as if he’d just been waiting for permission. He let out a low whistle as he massaged it in his hand. “These huge tits are fucking perfect, baby. The way they fill up my hands... unreal.”

I was already almost dizzy with pleasure, and they’d just gotten started. Dane parted his lips and pressed his full, open mouth over my clit, the wet heat of his tongue covering my every white-hot nerve right as Bryce pinched my nipple between his fingers. My back arched, my breath coming out heavy and jagged.

“God, look how they bounce,” Bryce grunted, leaning down to kiss the nipple he’d just pinched while his other hand grabbed my left breast, not wanting it to go untouched. He pressed them together, moving to put his face in the cleavage he’d created, sighing in satisfaction. “I could spend all day, all *week* playing with these tits and never get bored.”

I could feel the pressure building within me, the red hot desire coming to a head as Dane bruised my thighs in the shape of his fingers. God, I felt so claimed, like I belonged to these men and the pleasure they could give me. Dane grunted, almost a battle cry, as he buried his face harder into my pussy, his tongue sliding into my entrance for a quick taste before it came up to swirl around my clit again. When he took it between his lips and sucked at the same time, my orgasm shook through me, the high, keening sound that left my lips growing louder as Bryce pinched each of my nipples in his hands, massaging them to heighten my pleasure.

I could hear Xander give a slow clap as I came down, Dane kissing my pussy more gently to help me slide back down from my peak. He hungrily lapped up the messy wetness around my inner thighs, then pulled back to grin at me, his face glistening. Bryce bent his head to kiss my lips, caressing my tits idly. “So fucking pretty when you come, Jade,” he whispered against my mouth. “Can’t wait to see you do it again and again.”

“Now, Jade.” Xander’s voice grabbed my attention, and I turned my head to lock eyes with him. By now, his long cock was fully tenting the front of his pants, the lazy posture he held only emphasizing its length—back slumped against the chair, legs spread, dominating the space. “You want Dane to drive his cock into you and coat your walls with his cum?”

“Yes,” I said, my voice surprisingly steady. I looked from Xander to Dane, whose dark eyes were intense, his hands poised at the waistband of his underwear. The hair that covered his chest descended in a dark line that disappeared into his boxer-briefs, so sexy and masculine that I wanted to press my face to it. I was too far away, though, and there would be time for that later. I gave Dane a slow nod, and he carefully took off the last piece of clothing that hid him from me.

When he sprang free from the elastic, I gasped. Dane’s hard cock, uncut and throbbing, moist with precum at the tip, was the most mouth-watering sight I’d seen in a while. Well, at least since I first saw Bryce and Xander’s dicks. Each of them brought something different to the table, and I felt like the luckiest woman on earth that I was getting to experience them all this way. I felt Bryce shift under me, holding me up so he could undo his own jeans and let his own dick spring free. He was grinning when he laid me back onto his thighs, looking past his erection to my awed face.

“What are you thinking, baby girl?” Bryce asked me, and my first instinct was to check with Xander whether I was allowed to speak.

Xander gave a curt, “Answer him, Jade.”

“I’m...” Fuck, could I really say what I was thinking? Sure, they’d all already watched me come apart, *made* me reach orgasm with their mouths and hands and bodies. But letting them see my inner depravity still felt scary.

“Answer him,” Xander nearly shouted, making me jump. “Or Dane’ll fuck your ass instead of your sweet cunt.”

Oh. The frightening prospect of that sent a confusing shockwave through me—worry, but want, too. I wasn’t ready for that yet—I’d never done anal, never even considered it before now—but the idea of being so full, my pussy *and* my ass getting railed at the same time, even as another one of their cocks filled my mouth... it was appealing.

Someday, maybe. But not right now.

“I’m thinking about how I want to suck Bryce’s dick while... while Dane fucks me.” I let out the words hurriedly, and Bryce whispered an aroused curse. I watched his dick twitch against his toned stomach.

“She really is an insatiable little whore,” Xander said through a menacing grin. “Well, you boys heard her. Give her what she wants.”

Dane didn’t need further encouragement. He scooted closer to me on the couch and grabbed my waist, flipping me over onto my stomach in a quick move that turned me on even more. Christ, I loved being manhandled by them. Dane jerked my hips up so that I was spread out before him, my ass in the air, and I came up onto my hands and knees so I could have more control when I sucked Bryce down.

Then I could feel a thick head at my entrance, and before I knew it, Dane was finally sliding into me with a deep, masculine groan. I cried out at the pleasure, the delicious stretch, and before I could fully catch my breath, Bryce’s hand was fisting in my hair. He pulled my open mouth down to meet the head of his dick, and I sucked him inside eagerly.

“Fucking hell,” Bryce gritted out. Behind me, Dane wasted no time, starting to move his hips the second he was fully seated inside me. Christ, he was so deep this way, and as he

fucked me at a steady pace, I rocked back against him, matching him thrust for thrust.

“Suck him like you mean it, Jade,” Xander called from across the room, though I could hear that he was closer now than before, moving toward us at a slow pace. Bryce’s hand was still in my hair, but he loosened his grip so I could have more control, and I sank my lips further down his shaft until he touched the back of my throat, sucking hard.

“Fuck,” Dane called from behind me as he increased his pace, stroking inside me with the force of his need. “You’re fucking killing me, Jade. Christ!”

I moaned around Bryce’s dick, and my inner muscles clenched. Both men reacted, Bryce throwing his head back against the sofa, Dane gripping my ass cheeks with that bruising touch of his. I felt a pair of warm lips meet my shoulder, and I pulled off Bryce for just a moment to look around and find Xander had come to his knees beside the couch, his cock finally out, too. He met my eyes as he stroked himself slowly, taking it all in from so much closer, now. The beauty of his hardness in his lovely hand was breathtaking. He was no longer merely a spectator, and even on his knees, he held power over the three of us like the divine right of kings.

“Keep going,” Xander urged me, moving closer to wrap his arm around my waist. He held onto me as Dane continued driving me wild with his thrusts, and his other graceful hand came to grip my chin. He tilted it down, opening my mouth wider, and Bryce guided his cock back into my mouth.

I was almost overstimulated with all of the pleasure at this point, but I couldn’t stop if I wanted to. Not when I was so close to coming again, and I could feel that Dane and Bryce were close, too. Dane’s hips became frantic, pulling out of me only an inch or so just to slam back in, moving me up the couch. I choked on Bryce’s length, but I didn’t want to relinquish the salty taste of him, so I gripped the base of his shaft with one hand and squeezed as I licked him.

“That’s it, Jade,” Xander purred into my ear. “Take their cocks like a good little slut, and maybe I’ll let you come

again.”

Tears were streaming down my cheeks, and I moaned against Bryce’s dick as Dane pounded into me, fast and hard, skin slapping skin. I felt his palm come down on my ass, a strong, sharp spank that made me twitch and hiss like a feral cat. He did the same to the other cheek, grunting as he did so. I never wanted him to stop, wanted to try my luck at teasing him until he slapped me harder, punishing me for bad behavior. The thought of him leaving red marks on my ass to match the bruises in the shape of his fingers... it was all so delicious.

When Xander moved, the arm that had been slung around my waist as if to tether me to earth pulling away, I wanted to protest, but it was hard with my mouth still full. From the way his breath caught, I could tell he’d moved to stroke his own cock with that hand instead. In seconds, though, he was bringing his other hand up to trail down my belly and find my pulsing clit. He took it between his fingers and stroked with firm pressure right as Dane changed the angle of his thrusts, hitting me deeper.

This time, I came with enough force that my legs shook, almost collapsing before Dane grabbed me, holding me like a ragdoll, flush against his hips. He fucked me hard and fast, extending my orgasm until I had to pull off Bryce and scream a feral, “Fuck!”

Even as my pleasure reached its peak again, my climax seeming to intensify, Dane swore in satisfaction and drew up his own end with another hard stroke. His orgasm arrived with an almost pained cry that rang through the basement, putting the soundproofing to good use once again. There was nothing better than the feeling of his dick shooting liquid heat into me, the way his pulses synced with the aftershocks of my inner muscles, still clenching around him.

I could feel his cum dripping down my thighs when Dane pulled out of me, moving down the couch to catch his breath and making room for Xander to come behind me and sink into my pussy with his own hard length. *Fuck*, it was so hot to think that their combined seed would fill me up in tandem, and though I’d just finished coming, Xander’s skilled fingers kept

up their work on my clit, massaging slowly over the hood in a way that had me working up to coming yet again.

All the while, I was still sucking Bryce's dick deep into my throat, sobbing around it as Xander made love to me in long, slow thrusts. There was nothing but need, ecstasy, as I doubled my efforts to get Bryce to shoot his load down my throat. I pulled off him to spit onto the swollen head of his cock, coming down to suck him again twice as sloppy.

"Oh, *fuck*, Jade, I'm gonna—" Bryce cried out, tugging my hair hard enough to hurt, and then he was jerking his hips up almost without meaning to, and I felt the liquid heat of his climax squirting into my throat. *Perfection*. My lips rounded out the tremors of his cock, my tongue sliding back and forth across his head to taste every tangy drop of him. When my mouth became too much for his over-sensitized flesh, he pulled me up to kiss him, smiling wickedly.

"I bet you've got another orgasm in you, Jade," I heard Xander say from behind me. He slid out of me, which made me whimper at the sudden emptiness. Bryce and I looked at him, and Dane watched us all from the other end of the sofa, dark eyes brooding but satiated, his cock now limp against his leg. I took a deep, shaky breath and turned over, leaning my back against Bryce's chest. His arms came around me, comforting and warm.

"What are you going to do about it?" I asked Xander. He gave me a full, wide smile, unlike anything I'd ever seen, before he threw one of my legs over his shoulder and thrust his full length back into me again.

I knew it would only take another minute. Xander was the only one who hadn't come yet, and I could tell he wanted nothing more than to be the last one to fill me with his seed. Full circle, I guess—this whole debaucherous affair would start *and* end with Xander Townsend's cum dripping out of my pussy. He slapped my clit, a sharp pleasure-pain that made me cry out, before he fucked me like an animal, fully unrestrained, fast and hard enough that I knew I'd be sore for sure. As if that weren't already destined to be true after all the delicious sex I'd been given this afternoon. Bryce whispered sweet filth in

my ear, and Dane's dark eyes never left my body, and then Xander and I were coming together.

When my third—fourth? I'd lost count—orgasm finally finished and Xander pulled out of me, feeling just as wrecked as I was, if the look on his face was any indication, I felt like I could probably sleep for thirty years. Instead, all three of the guys took me into their arms, our bodies forming a surprisingly wholesome cuddle puddle after all of our X-rated energy had depleted.

We all knew things had changed, a seal had broken, and no matter what lies we were telling ourselves about this being a one-time gig, I knew none of us had even begun to get this out of our systems. There was so much more I wanted from the three of them, I wasn't sure there was enough time left in all the world. There certainly wasn't enough time left in our last year of high school, and who knew what would happen after that?

The four of us talked, laughing and teasing each other like friends, but I wasn't sure that was what we were. Friends didn't typically fuck each other's brains out, but more than that, I still wasn't sure how I felt about them as people. And worse yet, now I had a new worry that wouldn't leave no matter how hard I tried to shove it away, enjoy this moment, stop *thinking* so damn much.

Did sleeping with all three of these guys, wanting to do it again and again as long as they'd let me, make me fucked up? My ex hadn't been able to be faithful to just me, and here I was, following in his footsteps by fucking three men whose friendship with each other should matter more than our intense mutual attraction. Even though they all knew what they were getting into and had volunteered freely, what did it say about me that I couldn't be satisfied with just one of them?

Was I just as bad as Owen?

JADE

Sneaking back into my Aunt Lynette's house that night after Xander dropped me off down the block felt so quintessentially high school, it was hard not to giggle. The house was dark, and it was late enough that I figured she might be asleep, since she had work in the morning. She wasn't the strictest guardian, anyway, so maybe she wouldn't even care that I was getting in after midnight, smelling like sex with my hair tangled to shit.

Well, that was a long shot, but I figured I had a pretty good chance of making it upstairs to my room before she ever knew I was here.

But of course, that wasn't how life worked. The living room light flicked on right as I was reaching the stairs, and I jumped, letting out a frightened shriek.

"Han—*Jade*, where the hell have you been all night?" My aunt was sitting in her favorite overstuffed armchair by the front window, her graying hair hanging limply around her still-youthful face. "Do you have any idea what time it is?"

"I, uh... I know it's late," I said lamely, taking a slow step toward her. My legs were a bit wobbly, my inner muscles sore, so I couldn't risk walking much further. She might ask me what was wrong, and though she and I were close and she wasn't nearly as strict and boring and adult-like as my parents, I didn't think I could tell her, *I just got absolutely railed by three hot bullies! Not sure I'll be able to walk straight ever again, ha-ha, how was your day?*

“Damn right it is,” Lynette said, standing up but quickly losing steam. She always said she was a lover, not a fighter. She heaved a great sigh, swiping a frustrated hand over her hair. “You want some tea?”

This was part of her famous Cool Aunt routine, which I wasn’t really in the mood for, but some tea really did sound nice right about now. I followed Aunt Lynette to the kitchen and plopped down at the counter while she fiddled with the kettle. She brought a large glass jar full of different tea bags with her when she came to stand across from me, leaning forward to hand it to me. “Pick whatever you like, hon. Let’s chat.”

“There’s nothing to really *chat* about—” I started, but she cut me off.

“What, can’t I chat with my niece just because, without having something specific in mind? You haven’t been around much, kiddo, and I feel out of the loop.” She gave me a sad smile, gesturing for me to pick a tea. I dug into the jar and found something herbal with notes of peach and ginger.

“Listen, I *am* in charge of you right now, so I’ve gotta lay into you a bit about coming home so late, alright? Although I guess we never set a specific curfew, so it’s partially my fault.”

“So, this is your fault, then? Sweet. I like that logic,” I joked, and she stuck her tongue out at me like she used to do from across the table at Thanksgiving when I was a child. It made me smile.

“You’re a good girl, Jade, so I’m not trying to call you out for smoking pot or, God forbid, running around at all hours of the night with a bunch of *boys*.” She’d adopted a playfully scandalized tone as she said that last bit, so I knew she wasn’t even fishing for information. But it had always been nearly impossible for me to hide things from my aunt—she was too damn perceptive, and I wore all my feelings plainly on my face. When my wince and red cheeks registered, her green eyes—the shade a precise match for mine—grew wide. “Oh, so there *is* a boy!”

Three, actually, but who’s counting?

“Aunt Lynette, *please* don’t make it a big deal,” I groaned, and luckily, the kettle started to whistle then, so she busied herself with making our tea.

“Flower mug?” she asked me, holding up the yellow-and-green floral mug I liked best from her cabinet, and I agreed. She brought it over with a jar of local honey and a cool honeycomb spoon for drizzling, because of course she remembered I liked honey in my tea. Funny, if it wasn’t about my academic achievements, I was sure my mom couldn’t recall minute details like that about me if you paid her.

Aunt Lynette doctored her own black tea with oat milk and honey, and for a long second, we stirred our spoons, clanking them quietly against the porcelain. It carried through the otherwise-silent house, and soon her gray-and-white cat Gizmo came bounding into the kitchen, weaving his way between the legs of my barstool, trying to rub against my feet.

“Aw, look, honey! Even Gizmo wants to hear all about this boy you’re seeing. I hope he’s better than that last one, don’t you, bud?” She was talking to the cat, who came to circle her at the sound of his name, but her comment about Owen still made me snort.

“Aunt Lyn! Stop!” I laughed, and she smiled at me.

“What? I thought we hated Omar.”

“Owen,” I corrected her through giggles. “We do hate him. Obviously.”

“*Obviously*,” Aunt Lynette agreed with a solemn nod. She took a long sip from her tea, then shot a sideways glance my way. “But seriously, I hope he makes you happy and treats you well. That last one wasn’t worth your time, but you’re a smart girl, so I trust you not to make the same mistake again.”

“You’d be surprised,” I muttered, and she gave me a probing look. “No, it’s—it’s not like that. They’re not—I mean, he’s—”

“Wait a minute. They? As in more than *one* boy?”

I groaned, falling forward to lay my forehead on the cool countertop. How was I this bad at being a secretive teenager?

“Is it two boys? That’s not so bad.”

My silence was damning. Aunt Lynette sounded almost impressed when she said, “*Three?*” and I let out a mortified groan.

“Honey, it’s okay, I’m not judging! It’s not like you’re sleeping with all three of them at once or anything!”

“Bye,” I said, standing up from my chair quickly enough that the damn thing tipped over and poor Gizmo ran hissing from the room. But Aunt Lynette grabbed my arm before I could flee as well, and when I turned back to her, her face was soft, concerned.

“You... you’re seeing *three* boys at once?”

No use lying now. I sighed, nodded, and after I’d picked my chair back up in the longest silence of my life, she let out a low whistle.

“Little girl, sounds like you’re in a pretty tricky situation. Are you... are you in love with these boys?”

“No! God, no. It’s...” How could I calmly and rationally explain what was going on between me and the guys if I didn’t quite know myself? I simply settled for, “It’s... more casual? I’m honestly not sure why I’m so into them. They’re all such assholes, to be honest.”

“Are they mean to you?” Aunt Lynette demanded like she was ready to fight.

“Well, no. Not anymore, anyway. It’s complicated, alright? But I promise it’s all under control, and I didn’t want to tell you like this. Or... at all, ideally.”

“Honey, please. You should have figured out by now that you can’t hide anything from your ol’ Aunt Lynette. I was almost recruited by the CIA, you know.”

“What? No, I did *not* know that!”

“That’s a story for another day.” She waved a hand to dismiss that topic even though I was dying to change the subject. “Do these boys treat you well?”

I thought about their apologies first, and even the honesty of Dane's non-apology, which had something admirable to it. Again, I respected it so much more than the artifice Owen had maintained for so much of our relationship. And then, of course, there was the way the three of them practically worshiped me in bed. If making sure I had multiple orgasms wasn't considered "treating me well," what was?

"Well, yeah. If they were terrible to me, I'd run away." And I was finding it harder and harder to even conceptualize doing that at this point.

"Alright. Good. We don't want another Osmond in the picture, do we?"

"*Owen*," I laughed, correcting her again, but she waved me off. "They're... really great about the Owen stuff, too. They're completely on my side, and I think if I asked them to, like, blow up his car or something, they'd totally do it. Not that I'd ask!" I hurried to add.

"I know, hon. You've got a good head on your shoulders, so I trust you not to make any big dumb decisions, especially with college right around the corner. And hell, these days, there are all kinds of new-fangled modern relationship dynamics. Why not have three boyfriends?" She laughed, a little incredulous.

"They're not my boyfriends," I said, but there was a little flicker of something like hope in my heart just hearing her refer to them in that way. But before I could get too dreamy and silly about that, a different thought occurred to me, and I felt myself turn a little shy. I reached for my rapidly-cooling mug of tea, drinking half of it in one big, nervous gulp.

"What's on your mind?" Aunt Lynette asked. You really couldn't get anything past her.

"I just... I'm a little worried that... well, we're not dating, but *seeing* three guys at once... does it make me just as bad as—?"

"Orin? Your lying ex? Absolutely not," she said with enough conviction to actually take some worry off my

shoulders. “Because he was a *liar*, Jade. He told you the two of you were exclusive, he made a commitment, and he didn’t follow through with it. Are you lying to these... suitors of yours?”

“No. They know everything. They... they know all about each other, and they’re all totally cool with it.”

“There you go,” Lynette said, dusting off her hands as if her job was done here. “You’ve got enthusiastic consent, and you’re all over eighteen, right?”

“Right,” I agreed.

“So you’re adults. As far as I’m concerned, you can make your own decisions, and so can these boys. You’re nothing like that spoiled idiot who broke your heart, sweet girl. First of all, you’re a whole lot prettier.” She tucked a strand of hair behind my ear like she used to do when I was little, and I gave her a weak smile. She was more serious when she spoke again, though. “But you’ve also got integrity, and that’s something that kid will never have.”

Our tea time finished, I helped Aunt Lynette clean up, and then we both headed upstairs to bed. I replayed the conversation with her in my head as I brushed my teeth, did some skincare, and put on a podcast about the history of horse riding that I’d been quietly obsessed with, settling in for a good night’s sleep.

It was nice of Aunt Lynette to be so supportive, and she had a fair point about honesty. There were no more lies between me, Xander, Dane, and Bryce any longer—except for the part where I was letting her think this thing was casual. Somehow, that didn’t feel true to me after the mind-blowing sexual encounter we’d all shared, much less the sweet cuddling they surprised me with afterward.

But I couldn’t entertain the idea of having an actual relationship with three guys at once, no matter how cool and accepting of the idea my aunt had been. It wasn’t done, especially not by me, normal little Jade Wells. I could never have a four-way prom date, introduce my three boyfriends to my parents, marry three men at once someday. There would

never be a scenario where it was me and three handsome, vastly different men, all grown up and still together in a beautiful house we bought, a roomy SUV, and a California King-sized bed to share.

I wasn't dishonest like Owen, and I knew that for a fact, but it didn't feel much different lying to myself. Still, I told myself that I was just fine having no future with the guys as I drifted off to sleep, visions of unconventional domestic bliss playing out in my head.

DANE

If I cared enough to lie to myself, I would be pretending that I was actually showing up for homeroom today because I wanted to turn over a new leaf. That I was deciding to actually give a shit about school and rules and arbitrary things like that, no reason, just self-improvement. But despite my pretty advanced lying skills, I wasn't a particularly good target for being lied to, always able to see through bullshit. So I knew I was really here to see Jade again.

When she showed up and I was already in my usually-neglected seat, she had to do a double-take, like she didn't believe I was really here. I smirked, gestured for her to sit beside me, and I took her mirroring half-smile as a positive sign. We were allies now, after all, scheming together for Owen Prescott's downfall and having great sex to boot.

Not a bad way to spend my last year of high school.

Jade slid into her seat a little clumsily, her thick ass honestly not the ideal size for the tiny school desks. It was the ideal size for squeezing, biting, and spanking, though, so I took that as a win.

"Nice to see you again, Jade," I told her, looking her over so that she'd know I was picturing her naked.

"You too, Dane," she said back coolly. "Did you have a nice evening? Sleep okay?"

"Like a rock," I said. "Woke up like one, too. Rock hard, that is."

Jade let out a surprised laugh, glancing quickly around to make sure none of our classmates heard me. They weren't paying any attention, and I wouldn't care if they were. "That is so cheesy. I thought you were supposed to be cool."

"Funny, I thought I was hot," I shot back, and Jade laughed again. Damn, but it was lovely to hear her laugh like this, uninhibited now that we weren't enemies. And speaking of our new budding partnership... "I had a great idea last night, too."

"About?"

"Operation: Destroy Owen Prescott."

"You did?" Jade asked incredulously.

"Hell yeah. I'm excited for our little revenge plot, honestly. He's always been a dick, and the vigilante justice gig is right up my alley. My grandma always says I'm too smart for my own good, and I think my natural talent for this kind of shit is what she means."

Jade's face was skeptical, but interested. She gave me a nod. "Alright, then. Let's hear the plan."

"I think you and I should go on a date," I told her simply. I let her squirm under my gaze for a long moment before I continued, "What better way to make someone jealous than to show all kinds of proof that you're thriving without them? So, you and I go on a date, someplace where we're sure to be seen and talked about. We have a good time, take some photos to post... *boom*. Owen dies of a rage-induced cardiac explosion."

"You know, Dane, it's cute that you want to take me on a date so badly you have to come up with a whole plot about it," she said teasingly. "You *can* just ask me out, if you want. I'm a simple girl."

"Hah. Simple? Not a chance." But the thought of simply asking her out did have a perfect appeal to it. *Not your style, dude*, I told myself.

"Of course, that doesn't mean I'd definitely say yes to a date with you, since you're still a huge jerk and all, but who knows?" Jade went on, giving a cute little shrug that emphasized her breasts for a moment. "Maybe I'm feeling

extra sweet today.” She winked, and I remembered the last time my friends and I had pointed out her sweetness—while tasting and touching every delicious inch of her. Oh, she knew exactly what she was doing. I respected it, honestly, but I also couldn’t wait to fill that mischievously-smiling mouth with my cock, silence her sass for once.

“That’s a very clever idea you’ve had there, but I’m not the date type, princess. I’ve told you that already. So this is purely for the plot.”

“Uh-huh,” she said, but she was smiling when she said, “Alright, Dane Schwartz. I’ll go on a date with you.”

And my stupid heart seemed to skip a beat in my chest at the words.

“Maybe we can go to that boba place on East Cameron,” Jade suggested next, her eyes lighting up at the idea. “I know Owen loves to hang out there, so we might even get lucky and run into the douche master himself.”

Instantly, my mood turned a little sour. I frowned, looked away from Jade so she wouldn’t be able to read my expression as easily. “Sure,” I told her, even as every fiber of my being wanted to say *Fuck Owen Prescott, Jade. You shouldn’t even be thinking about him when you’re with me.*

I’d had plenty of great hookups over the years, and I’d never once reacted this way to one of them. Why did it matter if Jade only wanted to go on a date with me to get back at her ex? I knew that was her plan going in. I’d been the first one to uncover her subterfuge in the first place. So what if I’d had a strong reaction to finding that out? It was just the shock of it all, really. Once I’d gotten used to it, I was fine. I should be *fine*.

Luckily, my two friends showed up before I could go through any more stupid inner turmoil. Bryce greeted me with a signature jock handshake before he sat on Jade’s other side, laughing when I made fun of him for it. Xander gave us his usual “good morning, colleagues” nod as he sat in front of Jade, turning around in his chair so he could talk to all of us. Even with the huge unspoken thing between us, the memory of

what we did in Xander's basement and how things would never be the same again, we were all able to maintain our cool. Small talk turned to jokes, some of our usual teasing of New Girl Jade, but without the teeth. She laughed along, flipped us off, and tore into us with her signature fierceness, all while maintaining an air of lighthearted comfort.

"Hey, you guys are coming to the game, right?" Bryce asked us after he finished telling a funny story of something that happened in football practice. "Homecoming? It's a pretty big deal. Of course, I'm gonna make sure we win regardless, obviously, but it'd be great if I could have you all backing me up. Jade can be the good luck charm," he told us, winking at Jade at the end.

"I'll be there," Xander said simply.

"Count me in," I agreed.

Jade piped up with a sweet, "Sounds like fun."

It *did* sound fun, even though sports on the whole weren't really my thing. My friends and our girl—because that was how I was starting to think about Jade Wells, as *ours*, and I was sure the guys would agree with me—would have a good time regardless. We'd be together. Hell, after yesterday, I wanted us to be together all the time.

In that moment, I felt a strong sense of rightness and belonging. Like for once, I was actually part of something that was almost like a family. Family, in my experience, had never been half as nice, even, because I didn't get to choose the people I was born to. But this almost-family we'd made with Jade... it was beyond anything I'd ever dreamed of. No shitty alcoholic parents I hadn't seen in years who didn't care whether I was in prison or dead—both of which were possibilities for where Carl and Belinda Schwartz had ended up, too, since we weren't in contact. No indifferent, grumpy grandmother who treated me like a burden, always making comments about how she was looking forward to my getting out of her house.

Every moment with Xander, Bryce, and Jade felt ten times as homey as the calmest, happiest times in that fucking trailer,

and I finally felt like I contributed something to the group, too. This thing with the four of us couldn't work if one of us was missing, a classic car with four perfect tires. Like Bryce's stupid football shit, we were a team. And fuck, was it nice to have that—and a little terrifying to think it could go away at any time.

BRYCE

“**H**ola, partner,” I said to Jade, my Spanish accent abysmal enough to make her laugh. We had done the impossible and voluntarily paired up for an assignment in our Spanish class for the first time, and I was stoked to get to work with her. She usually paired up with a quiet girl named Rebecca on partner assignments, and I cajoled whatever nerd had the best grade to work with me, but now that we were in cahoots *and* fucking, I guess things had changed.

The surprised glances from our classmates didn’t go unnoticed, and even our teacher, Señora Sanchez, raised one of her dark eyebrows. Her lips quirked up in a bemused smile.

“Jade and Bryce working together? *¡Milagro!*” she exclaimed, causing a ripple of laughter across the classroom.

Jade shot me a look. It was the kind that said, *If this turns into a disaster, I’m throwing your ass under the bus faster than you can say autobús*. I couldn’t suppress my laughter, reveling in the shift in our dynamic.

With a nonchalant shrug to kick us off, we dove into the assignment, translating sentences about our fictional family’s vacation plans. Surprisingly, the atmosphere was light and easy, even as my body remembered being inside her and wanted more. I’d always want more of this girl. Jade’s sharp wit complimented my slapstick humor surprisingly well, and we traded banter effortlessly as we worked on the assignment, her at the helm of this still-afloat ship.

“*Mi hermano se llama Juan,*” I struggled to say to her, enjoying her clear amusement too much to be embarrassed about my accent. “*Es un payaso,*” I added, grinning at Jade.

“He’s a clown, huh? I don’t see that in the assignment.” She looked over her worksheet skeptically, holding back a wider grin I hoped to pull out of her by the end of class. “Well, if you’re talking about your *real* brother, you two must get along famously, then.”

“Nah, you’d think that, but my actual brothers are all kinda dicks,” I admitted with a dry laugh. I didn’t love the way her face fell at that admission, but the overwhelming need to share this with her was clawing its way up my throat anyway. *Shut up, Bryce, you big doofus.*

I could not.

“It’s not a big deal. I’m the youngest of five boys, so they fuck with me, you know? Just usual brother stuff. It’s their way of showing affection, I guess.”

Jade’s eyes softened, and she nudged me a little, reminding me that she was there in a quick, kind physical touch. “I don’t have any siblings, so... I guess I can’t really relate to that. It just sounds mean to me, them picking on the youngest and weakest one.”

“Hey, I didn’t say anything about being the *weakest,*” I shot back, puffing up my chest to emphasize my bulky frame. “When I was a kid, yeah. But now I’m bigger than all of those assholes. They mess with me about my grades and stuff a lot more now, but at least they’re all out of the house and have less opportunity. Of course, they were all fucking geniuses at school, like Xander and you.”

“You’re smart, too,” she said quietly. “It takes brains to remember all of those plays on the football field, and you’re clever sometimes with your jokes. There are different ways to be smart, you know.”

I couldn’t communicate with words how much it meant to me to hear her say that. To sense that she was being real, not just buttering me up. What reason would she have to lie now?

I'd already embraced the turncoat life. Plus, she already knew she had me wrapped around her little finger in the sexual sense. As far as I could tell, there was nothing else I could really give her.

I shrugged, feeling surprisingly vulnerable. "Yeah, maybe. But anyway, not to get all therapy on you or anything, but that's kind of why I'm... sort of a bully. After all those years being kicked around, sometimes it's just nice to mess with people to feel a bit more in control, you know? I'm working on it, but it's a hard habit to break."

Jade nodded, her empathy evident. "I get it. But you're more than that, Bryce. And for what it's worth, I like this side of you. The *real* you."

To lighten the mood, I couldn't resist throwing in a flirtatious joke. "So, Jade, *voulez-vous coucher avec moi?*" I smirked as I butchered another language, hoping to bring us back to our usual banter.

Jade laughed, a full, loud sound that devolved into an adorable snort-giggle. Señora Sanchez shot us a dirty look, but I used my signature charming smile to get her to wave us off and turn back to her computer.

"Wrong language, dumbass," she said with enough affection to soften the blow. While no one was looking, she reached up to brush a stray curl off my forehead, the tender swipe of her fingers across my skin filling me with warmth. God, I could get used to this. "But yes, you utter *payaso*, of course."

XANDER

“Ugh, this is so *frustrating*,” Jade let out instead of swearing up a storm. We were in physics class, to be fair, and she certainly knew not to further bother Mrs. Parsons with her bad behavior after our last foray into being lab partners. “I’m usually good at this stuff, but this assignment just doesn’t make any damn sense.”

After what had gone down at my house the day before, I was seeing everything Jade Wells did in a new light. Instead of another mundane physics class, right now, it was an adventure. I enjoyed watching her work, deciphering the mysteries of the universe with her in whatever small way I could. She had a way of making even the most mundane tasks more interesting, and it was only partly because I could picture her naked.

She was hunched over our lab equipment, her dyed brows furrowing in a way that gave her a cute crease to her forehead. I wanted to kiss it, but I wasn’t a freak, so I stayed in my seat and kept my hands to myself.

“Maybe you should take it up with Sir Isaac Newton,” I quipped. Jade narrowed her eyes.

“Cute, Xander. Why don’t *you* try it, if you’re so smart?”

“I think you can do it,” I said to her instead, and I tried not to feel bad about how surprised she looked at my kindness. “Let’s look at the variables again, alright? See what went wrong.”

With a few more tweaks and tries, our experiment worked, and I could tell how relieved Jade was to be finished with it by

the sincerity in her voice. “Thank you *so* much, Xander. I—” She cut herself off, shook out her red hair a little to clear her head, then met my gaze again. “I get pretty stressed about school stuff, and then I shut down. So, I appreciate your helping me out. And with minimal Townsend smugness, too. I’m impressed.”

I raised an eyebrow, feigning offense. “Gee, what a glowing endorsement.”

She laughed, the sound echoing a little in the otherwise quiet classroom, but Mrs. Parsons just smiled at us when we glanced toward her desk to make sure we weren’t being too disruptive. What a difference a bone-meltingly hot foursome could make in our relationship as lab partners.

Jade wasn’t the only one in class who struggled to understand the experiment, as it turned out. I ended up helping the two pairs on either side of our lab station figure it out, and they paid it forward, helping students throughout the room until eventually, we’d all finished the assignment. Mrs. Parsons thanked me, and I brushed it off, almost embarrassed by the praise. But when I finally made it back to my spot beside Jade, she was watching me with wide, green-eyed wonder that made it a little less embarrassing.

“Wow,” Jade said with genuine awe in her voice, even under her usual layer of sass. “You’re... really good at this stuff, actually. Like, I knew you were smart, but you’re actually pretty good with the teaching stuff, too.”

“I’ve, uh, had some practice,” I admitted, fidgeting in my seat. I avoided looking at her. “I actually do volunteer tutoring at an education-based nonprofit once a week.” I saw her expression soften, but before she could get any funny ideas about being too sweet and genuine with me, I hurried to punctuate the thought. “It looks good for college, alright? I need all the help I can get if I wanna make it to Harvard.”

Jade nodded, holding back the sly smile I knew she wanted to unleash. I appreciated that she was nicer than me, resisting the urge to tease. “Yeah, Harvard totally tracks for you. I’m sure you’ll get in. But in the meantime, you should let more

people see that you're not a total selfish dickhead sometime. Maybe you'd have more friends and fewer frightened followers."

I cracked a grin. "Aren't you curious about what I plan to study at Harvard?"

She narrowed her eyes. "Uh, sure?"

"Well, it won't surprise you that I'm interested in law," I started, twisting my pencil in my fingers. "But unlike my parents and the other lawyer Townsends, I'm not in it for the money."

"Uh, yeah, I'd hope not," she half-laughed. "You've already got a fat trust fund. How much more could you need?"

"Oh, you'll pay for that later," I told her in a low voice, and it was absolutely delicious how easily I could get her thinking about sex. It was clear in every pink blotch on her cheek, the way her breath caught in her throat, the way she avoided my eyes until I pivoted away from flirting.

"But no, Jade. It's not about the trust fund, though I do recognize that having that helps."

"Duh."

"I'm interested in going into human rights law," I admitted with pride. "Unlike my family members, I give a shit about the state of the world, and I'd rather go broke working toward something important than get more and more rich for nothing." Why did her opinion on this matter so much to me?

"Wow. And here I thought you were more interested in human wrongs," she teased, but her expression was kind, more open than I probably deserved. "If you care so much about the world, why do you let everyone around you think you only care about yourself?"

I squirmed under her serious gaze. I didn't have an answer for her, not really, so I gave her an undignified shrug.

"I like soft, good person Xander," she said quietly, laying her hand over mine on the desk. She didn't even look to make

sure no one was watching, and that filled me with pride. “I’m just saying you should show him off more. That’s all.”

I swallowed hard and gave her a silent nod. We needed a hard pivot away from talking about me, now. “Speaking of showing off, I’ve got a proposition for you, Jade.”

She smiled a little, her brow furrowing in confusion. Adorably confused. It made me want to bite her. “What kind of proposition?”

“Come with me to the homecoming dance,” I answered easily. That gave her pause. She blinked at me a couple of times, her brain seeming to buffer.

“You mean... as your date?”

“Yes. Is that so crazy, after everything?”

“No. No, of course not. We may have gotten the order a little backward, though.” She laughed, her cheeks flushed that sweet pink that reminded me of the rest of her sweetness, hidden now under clothes that didn’t keep me from wanting her. Mischief glinted in her eyes when she went on, “Won’t Bryce and Dane be jealous, though?”

“Maybe,” I allowed with a grin. “I suspect you’ll have to save a dance for each of them, too. But you’ll be on my arm when you walk in.”

I knew I had her before I even asked, but it was still satisfying when she agreed. Claiming her in front of the whole school would be satisfying to me on a deep, primal level I didn’t often allow myself to follow, and even sharing her with my friends felt *right* somehow.

My own lack of jealousy, my willingness to share Jade, surprised me. I’d always had everything I wanted, and learning to share hadn’t been part of my childhood since my sister was several years older than me and we were rich enough to have two of everything, regardless. But Jade wasn’t some stupid childhood toy, either. She was a beautiful woman with plenty of attention and affection to spread around, and Bryce and Dane were my two best friends.

Even when the overwhelming sense of rightness, of belonging, swept over me at the thought of Jade, Dane, Bryce, and me, there was something about all of this that was hard for me to accept. The taboo of it, maybe, or how it just wasn't what I'd always pictured for myself. If I allowed myself to consider the possibilities of an unconventional long-term relationship among the four of us, though, I thought it just might work. If I could get over my rigid idea of the Townsend way, accept the emotions I was used to suppressing, this might just turn into something amazing.

JADE

When I first gave Leah the full run-down of everything that had happened since we last spoke, her jaw fell open and refused to close for the rest of lunch. She ignored her food as she probed me for more details. “So what’s next, Miss Bachelorette? Are you gonna make the guys all fight to the death to determine who gets to be your full-time boo?”

I smirked, taking a dramatic pause before I revealed the new development of the day. “No, no *Hunger Games* shit like that. But today, Dane did ask me out on a sort-of-real date.”

Leah squealed and bumped the table, nearly knocking over her energy drink. “So you’re going out with *the* bad boy hottie of Coldwater High? Girl, you’re so lucky. How did you swoop in and get that kind of action so fast? I’ve been struggling for years over here.”

“Well, it’s really just for show. Part of the revenge plan. He says we’re gonna post pictures online and really rub salt into Owen’s self-inflicted wounds.” I shrugged, trying to hide the butterflies that were definitely fluttering in my stomach, fake date or not.

“That is literally straight out of a rom-com. Oh, my God.” Leah shook her head at me. “That makes *three* dates, right? The football game with Bryce, the dance with Xander, and now this thing with Dane. That’s a goddamn harem, Jade! You’re literally living my dream.”

“It is *not* a harem,” I told her, but after a second thought, I let out a short burst of laughter. “Technically, I think it would be a reverse harem? One of my old friends at Worthington used to read tons of those smutty e-books just like this, actually. But it’s not like that!”

“You’ve literally got three whole boyfriends,” Leah marveled.

“They are *not* my boyfriends. They’re just... it’s casual.”

But Leah seemed to believe that about as much as my central nervous system did, which is to say not at all. If I could get all of this amped-up, anxious energy to disperse, life would be a whole lot easier. *You’ve already fucked them all, Jade. What is there to be nervous about?*

Dating the three of them felt so much more real, somehow. Even if the homecoming game was more of a group hang, and my date with Dane was all to advance the revenge plot, everything was starting to feel a lot more serious than it had while I was drowning in multiple orgasms.

“Do you know what you’re gonna wear for your date with Dane?” Leah asked more casually, turning back to her lunch at last. I felt like I could breathe more easily with the reduced scrutiny.

“I really haven’t thought about it. He says the plan is a surprise, so I’m not even sure what we’re doing.”

“Oh, that is *so* romantic. You can say it’s casual all you want, Queen, but that boy is down bad if he’s planning a whole surprise date for you.”

If I were being honest with myself, I was inclined to agree. But Leah’s eyes lit with excitement, an idea striking her, and we didn’t dwell longer on that topic. “Oh, my God, wait. This is the *perfect* opportunity for a makeover. I’ve always wanted to give someone a perfect glow-up. Can I help you get ready? *Pleeeeeeease?*”

Her kid-on-Christmas enthusiasm made me laugh, and what could it really hurt? I shrugged, and Leah let out another squeal. Then she leaned in, her voice conspiratorial and

devious. “Honey, we’re gonna make sure you look even more drop-dead gorgeous than usual. Meet me at my place after school, and we’ll show these boys what the queen of revenge really looks like.”

LEAH’S FAMILY home was quaint and comfortable, and once her mom finished supplying us with a smorgasbord of after-school snacks, the transformation began. Leah used her makeup skills to give me a tasteful, sexy smoky eye with a sharp winged liner. She and I were a similar dress size, so Leah lent me a deep green dress with cute ruffles around the hem, and she whistled and whooped at me when I tried it on. “This color with your hair? Girl, you’re gonna give that boy a heart attack.”

“That’s what I’m going for.” I laughed.

When my hair was tamed into smooth waves and the look was finished, I got to have my stereotypical mirror moment. She’d turned me into someone I almost didn’t recognize, a certified hot girl who screamed confidence.

Leah snapped a picture of me, her eyes gleaming with mischief. “Jade, *this* is your new profile pic. Trust me, Owen’s gonna question every life choice he’s ever made.”

“Done and done.” I chuckled, setting the photo as my profile picture in a few quick clicks. Then, for shits and giggles, I added an extra touch of drama and set my relationship status to *It’s Complicated*. I ignored the immediate notifications I got on the post.

Leah continued to chat about my date, excited for me and even more excited to get all of the updates after the date was over. Despite my protests, she also couldn’t resist doing a bit of online stalking.

“I just wanna see what all the fuss is about this Owen guy,” she told me when I tried to protest. A sick part of me was a little curious what was up with my ex, too, so I justified it by telling myself it was just Leah who was looking, even though she’d tell me whatever she learned right away.

When she found a photo of him with a cute blonde, kissing her cheek, the news hit me a little harder than expected. Apparently, Owen wasn't just playing the field. He was *actually dating* one of the girls he had cheated on me with, posting all kinds of couple-y photos with her everywhere he could. "You're way prettier than her, if it helps," Leah told me by way of apology.

I didn't blame her for looking, though. Who cared if Owen was seeing someone, really? It bothered me more that he was being so open and proud, posting sappy captions, the kind of stuff he never shared online when he was with me. It stung, but in a strange way, it also felt like closure. Besides, I had three guys taking up all of my attention now, and there was no part of me that longed for the "good old days" with Owen.

Thinking about my upcoming date with Dane wiped all traces of sadness from my mind, though. Not only would I leave the night with plenty of cute, romantic photos to use as ammunition against Owen, but I was excited to spend some time alone with Dane, too. I couldn't wait to see what he had planned.

A text dinged on my phone right as we heard the rev of a car engine in Leah's driveway. I checked my screen to see a brief message from Dane, who had only added his number to my contacts earlier that day.

"He's here," I told Leah.

She grinned, ushering me toward the front door, shoving a borrowed matching purse into my hand. "This is gonna be so great! You look amazing. Okay, now remember, don't do anything I wouldn't do! So basically, use protection!"

I cackled as she practically shoved me out the door and into the night. A sexy, vintage black car gleamed in the driveway, and this may not be a fairytale, but I figured it was just as good a chariot as any.

DANE

“**W**here are we going?” Jade asked from the passenger seat of my precious, prized Impala. I kept my eyes on the road, because having gotten a perfect view of her as she climbed into my car, I knew I wouldn’t be able to think straight while looking at her. Damn, the girl cleaned up nice. I didn’t remember her looking this good even on the night she caught me in the pool house, and remembering it now, it felt like so long ago.

“Be patient, beautiful,” I said, surprising myself. “We’re almost there.”

When I pulled up to the small shopping center and parked, Jade still looked confused, but she resisted the urge to ask a million questions until we got out of the car. There, with no distractions and nothing keeping me from drinking her in, I could really admire how good she looked. Her lovely face was enhanced with makeup and probably black magic, her delectable curves shown off to perfection by the form-fitting green dress. And damn it, that color really brought out her eyes, too. “Jesus Christ, you’re gorgeous,” I told her without meaning to. “I can’t believe I get to touch you.”

Jade beamed at me, a sunshine smile to stave off the oncoming winter. She smoothed down her skirt against her lush thighs, and I noticed how she squirmed a little, too, so delightfully reactive. I couldn’t wait to be inside her again, get an even bigger reaction out of her. “You look really good, too,” she told me quietly, a sweet sheepishness in her voice,

and damn it if I didn't want to kiss her hard right there in the parking lot.

But we had plans. A date. I held out my hand for her to take and led her into one of my favorite places in the world.

The little shop wasn't impressive from the outside, just a dusty window and a faded old sign, but the inside of the used bookstore was like my mecca. As soon as she saw where we were, Jade let out a delighted little laugh.

“A bookstore?”

“The world's best secondhand bookstore,” I corrected her with a grin. “I practically live in this place. My gran's always pissed when I clutter up her trailer with more books.”

“I didn't really peg you as a big reader,” she admitted as we strolled further inside. The bookseller at the counter greeted us, and we both gave them a wave.

“Was it the attitude, or the piss-poor GPA?”

“Bit of both, honestly.” She laughed. She kept hold of my hand as we wandered through the stacks.

Jade was surprisingly easy to talk to as we wandered the bookstore. She pointed out cool covers and silly titles, saying “That's us” about every funny-looking animal duo on the kids' books on display. She laughed at my jokes as I made up backstories for the cheesy author photos on old thrillers. She picked out a couple of books that looked interesting to her, some fantasy thing with a horse on the cover and a copy of the most recent Reese Witherspoon Book Club pick that was in pristine condition despite being secondhand.

I already had plenty of books cluttering up my tiny bedroom, propping up the kitchen table, hidden under my grandma's couch so she wouldn't yell at me. So, instead of choosing anything to buy for myself, I pointed out some of my favorite titles and talked Jade's ear off about them, earning her rapt attention even when I struggled to remember wacky plot details from things I'd read years before.

She seemed genuinely impressed by me when I showed her a few of my favorite poetry collections, especially when I

quietly rattled off a short poem I'd memorized into her ear. Jade blushed and snuck a quick kiss on my cheek that had me blushing, too.

"It's awesome that you read so much," Jade told me as we were wrapping things up. The store was empty other than the one employee at the counter, and we were tucked in a quiet back corner. "Have you ever thought about getting a job someplace like this?"

"Customer service isn't really my forte. Can you picture me playing nice with some asshole who doesn't know the name or author of the book they're looking for and just remembers it as the one with the blue cover?" I pointed out to her, raising one eyebrow. When she realized her mistake, she laughed, and I wanted to kiss her, but I resisted the urge. Instead, I followed a different out-of-character impulse and told her, "I've always wanted to be a writer, though."

"What kind of stuff do you want to write?" She asked as we left, her freshly-bought books in her hands. I tucked my wallet back into my pocket, satisfied that she'd let me buy them for her.

"I don't really know what my main genre is, I guess," I explained as we walked down the sidewalk toward a little pizza place we'd planned to hit up for dinner. "As a kid, I wrote all kinds of silly Sci-Fi stories. Aliens and shit. But these days, I think I picture myself writing something a little more serious. I journal a lot, and I've got plenty of ideas, but..."

"It's hard to get started," she guessed, and I nodded.

Jade asked me more questions as we ordered and then ate some cheap, delicious pizza. She let me ramble about the kinds of important, influential literature I'd always dreamed of publishing someday, and I noticed a lot of the stories she told about her own childhood passions involved the horses she rode on her grandpa's farm.

"I bet you look hot on horseback," I told her playfully. "Ever try riding a horse naked? You know, a long-haired, Lady Godiva thing?"

“You’re such a *dude*.” She laughed, playfully shoving me in the booth we shared, but I pulled her to me with a secure arm around her shoulders, following my heart for a second and kissing her on the top of the head. It felt weirdly *right* to be so casually affectionate with her this way, like we were meant to be intertwined, somehow. I watched her from the corner of my eye, noticing the tiny shift in her expression as she became more serious.

“What is it?” I asked carefully, worried that she’d say it was me. But when Jade shook her head and pulled away to look at me, she kept my fingers laced with hers.

“It’s just... I think it’s so great that you know what you want to do, even if you don’t quite know how to get there yet. I wish I was like that,” she admitted.

“You should do something you care about,” I said, and Jade rolled her eyes at the platitude.

“Well, yeah. But it’s not that simple. My parents want so much for me—college, all the best internships, a lucrative career. They talk about my being a doctor, following in their footsteps and graduating top of my class in medical school. But the only thing I’ve ever had any real interest in... I’m pretty sure it’s not something they’d see as a legit career path.”

“What is it? Something with horses?” I guessed, and the surprise in her face was so open and innocent, like she’d never expected anyone to care about how she felt. A small ripple of rage went through me at the thought of Owen, who’d dated her for so long and had never given her that kind of attention. He’d just broken her down until even other people’s kindnesses were hard for her to accept.

“Yeah, actually. I... I guess you just got that from all of my horse stories.” She half-laughed, and I lifted the back of her hand up to my lips, kissing it to assuage her embarrassment. “I’ve loved them since I was little. They’re such gentle, majestic creatures, and even the history behind them... like, they practically helped us build our whole society, you know? That sounds so dorky to say.”

“Cute dorky, though,” I countered, and she laughed again.

“I’m just not sure what kind of jobs even exist where I could work with horses all day. I’m pretty good at science, so I’ve really considered trying to go to veterinary school, but I’m not sure if working with *all* animals is really my thing. Equine science is a thing, but...” She shrugged, and there was an air of defeat in it.

“You’ve got time, Jade. You don’t have to figure out what you want out of life when you’re eighteen.” *But I know that I want you*, a tiny, foolish voice said in the back of my head.

By the time we finished eating and were headed to another spot for ice cream on Jade’s suggestion, we’d moved past the more serious topics and were laughing and talking like old friends. When we finished our cones—cookies and cream for me, and butter pecan for Jade, which she refused to admit was an old people flavor—we climbed back into my car, since I’d told Jade eating in my prized possession was off-limits. She was still teasing me about that when we got to our final destination, a little clearing on the outside of town that had a perfect view of the night sky, the distant woods.

“Was this your big plan, Dane? Bringing me to a make-out spot in hopes you’d get lucky?” Jade asked me, but there was a sultry tinge to her words that told me she was just as one-track-minded as I was. I parked the car and we clambered out together, stepping into the chilly night air.

“I don’t think I need some big scheme to get lucky with you, princess,” I told her. She gasped a little when I pulled her flush against my front, her soft stomach and full breasts a warm cushion I wanted to sink into and never escape. Catching her by surprise, I kissed her once, hard and dirty, and she panted a little when I pulled back. I held up my phone near her face and said, “But we’re here to get the perfect photos. You know, for your revenge.”

Jade grinned wickedly and snatched the phone from my hands, setting up the angles and filters to get the perfect selfie. We switched the phone back and forth so I could get us better angles with my longer arms, and our photos got more and more flirtatious until there was a particularly steamy one, the two of us leaned back against the hood of my car, Jade’s head

tipped back in pleasure as I nipped at her neck with my teeth. It was a hot photo, and having that concrete evidence of her weakness for me satisfied something primal deep in my chest.

Jade was breathing heavily when she looked over the photos, sending them to herself and laughing a little breathlessly as I continued to tease her with kisses to her neck and jaw. She bit her lip through a smirk, looking up at me through her lashes as she handed the phone back.

“Those are all perfect, and I can’t wait to post them. But that last one... is just for us, I think.” She tapped my phone screen as I held it in my hands, making the screen wake up so I could see that she’d changed my lock screen. There we were, happy in lust, perfectly lit by the camera flash and the bright starlight.

“Deal,” I told her, heat burning through me at the sight of her sultry expression. “That one is just for us.”

And damn, did I love the sound of that *us*.

JADE

My date with Dane had been absolutely perfect until this point. And looking at his sexy, brooding features under the cool silver light of the moon, I knew exactly what this night needed. Getting to fuck him again would make this go down in history as the best date of all time.

Dane seemed to read my mind when he kissed me hard against the hood of his car, stealing my breath with the raw intensity of it. His tongue danced with mine in an erotic rhythm that he kept up when he moved from my lips to my neck again, speaking his intentions into the night.

“Thank God I’ve got you all to myself this time,” Dane nearly growled, and I whimpered when he took my earlobe between his teeth in a quick, sexy tug. “Do you have any idea how badly I’ve wanted you since the second we met?”

“I thought you h–hated me im–immediately,” I stammered out when Dane traced sweet circles over the hollow of my collarbone with his skilled tongue. He let me feel the warm buzz of his laughter, and then he came up to kiss my mouth again instead of moving lower like my body wanted. When he pulled back, looking me in the eyes, his irises were a deep, reflective black in the darkness.

“No, baby. I think I was mad about how badly I wanted you. If you’d have let me, I would have taken you right there in the garden. I would have fucked you hard against the windows of the cafeteria where the whole damn school could see how pretty you are when you come.”

I couldn't help myself. The image was so hot, I moaned, and my hand found its way between my legs underneath my skirt. Dane chuckled darkly and pulled his mouth away from me again to watch me massage my clit through my panties. He licked his lips.

"Impatient, aren't you?" he asked, his tone mocking. I nodded frantically, looking him in the eyes as I ground my hips against my still-working hand. I gasped when he flipped up my skirt so he could get a better view of what my fingers were doing. "Oh, your pretty panties are already soaked, baby. Poor thing. Why don't you let Daddy take care of that for you?"

I let out an involuntary noise, hearing him call himself Daddy. It had never been a kink of mine before, but now that he'd said it, it was the hottest thing I'd ever heard.

"Yes, please, Daddy," I parroted back to him on a gasp, and his gaze darkened as he grabbed my wrist, halting my efforts to appease my own need. My pussy screamed out for attention, and I squirmed in his hold for a second before I brought my other hand up to pick up the slack.

Dane let out a cruel laugh as he grabbed my other wrist. In a few seconds, he was holding both of my wrists in the ironclad grip of his one hand, leaving my clit untouched and throbbing with need. Torturing me further, he brought his free hand up to trace a circle over my lower tummy with his finger, a featherlight touch that almost tickled. I squirmed, pouting as he moved further from my pussy instead of closer to it. Another laugh.

"Oh, Jade. You're so cute when you're being bratty. I can give you what you need, but you have to ask nicely for it first." He hooked his finger under the elastic of my panties, then let it snap, a sharp sting against my skin. I whimpered. "Tell me what you want, baby, and I'll give it to you."

"I—I want your mouth," I breathed, feeling myself redden as I heard my own words. When Dane looked at me expectantly, as if telling me to go on, I tried again. "I want your mouth, *please*."

“So polite,” he taunted as he bent forward to kiss me on my bare stomach. When my hips jerked, searching for more, he only laughed again. “You have to be more specific, Jade. Where do you want my mouth? What do you want it to do?”

My heartbeat was a stampede in my ears. He’d hardly even touched me, but I could feel that I was sopping wet, my lower lips swollen with need. I swallowed hard and told him, more confidently this time, “I want you to lick my pussy until I come, Daddy. Pretty please.”

Dane didn’t need anything more than that. With a confidence that only made me want him more, he placed my hands in his hair, showing me to hold on as he sank to his knees in front of the car. He pulled me forward so he could reach me, planting his hands on my inner thighs once he’d peeled off my panties and tossed them to the side. I figured he was impatient by now, too, when he dove in face-first, eating me out like a wild animal.

It was thrilling, Dane licking me so sensually while I was still clothed, out here under the sky where anyone could wander by and catch us. The eroticism of the scene had me twitching with need, every touch of his tongue against my pussy feeling amplified somehow. I was sure I’d come quickly, especially with the skill of Dane’s mouth, the way he clearly enjoyed eating me out. His own pleasure was just as acute as mine. He hummed in satisfaction against me, making deep sounds of lust with no self-consciousness, and he gripped me hard with the perfect pleasure-pain.

Christ, the irresistible sensations seemed to come from everywhere at once, sending tingles over every inch of my skin. I was holding myself onto this earth by the roots of Dane’s dark hair as he licked me, kissed me with twice the passion he’d shown to my mouth, and drove me wild. He sucked my clit and then released it with a loud smack, and I didn’t worry about anyone being around when I cried out into the night.

It didn’t take much longer for Dane to have me screaming as I came, and while I was still trembling against his car, he moved back up to kiss my lips, silencing my cries of pleasure.

When he pulled away from my mouth, his soft expression just made me want him more. I told him, “Now it’s your turn.”

We clambered into the back seat of Dane’s car. The spacious little cabin was clean and well-cared for, because Dane clearly cherished this thing. But I wanted him to feel cherished now that he’d taken such good care of me, so I wasted no time. I climbed into his lap and undid his pants quickly as we kissed, and I tugged his bottom lip with my teeth right as I freed his cock from his clothes, gripping him firmly in my hand. He let out a blissed-out growl, clearly just as sensitive and revved-up as I had been before he licked me. Within seconds, I was holding intimate eye contact with him as I guided him to my tight, wet entrance. We both gasped as I made contact with his tip.

It was so satisfying, so powerful, to watch Dane’s jaw go slack as I took him inside me. I let out a strangled little cry as I lowered myself further onto his lap, taking him deeper.

“You’re so big,” I whispered, then kissed him hard, trying to imbue it with every drop of emotion I felt coursing through me after this magical night. When I pulled back again and laid my hands on his chest, working myself slowly down his full, impressive length, he was watching me with starstruck awe, completely enthralled as if I were some sort of goddess. He leaned his head forward to press a soft, worshipful kiss to the tops of each of my breasts.

“You’re perfect,” he whispered. Carefully, tenderly, he pulled down the neckline of my dress—Leah’s dress—to expose my lacy bralette. The combination of the textured fabric and the wetness of his mouth when he gave my nipple a gentle suck was exquisite, and I moaned. “So beautiful, baby. Can’t believe you’re mine.”

Mine. It was so raw, so passionate a confession that I wondered if he was even in his right mind, if he’d remember saying it in the light of day. But I didn’t want him to take it back, and I hoped beyond hope that he meant it. Because to me, in that moment, I was his, and I wanted him to know that. So I took a deep breath that caught in my throat as he exposed

my damp nipple to the cool air, and I sank all the way down onto his cock.

I rode Dane in a slow rhythm, my hips undulating like the tides as I gently raised and lowered myself, trying to make this good for him. All the while, Dane's mouth never stopped working, moving to lavish attention on each of my breasts, then to kiss the space between them, then to kiss my mouth.

In between kisses, he murmured a string of near-nonsensical praise. "So tight, baby. Your perfect pussy, so good and wet for me. That's right, ride me just like that. You look so pretty on my cock. Never want you to stop. I always wanna be inside you."

My next climax built inside me like a slow ascent, reminiscent of the lovely night drive we'd taken to get up to this beautiful spot. Dane's pleasure grew gradually as well, both of us hypnotized by the gentle movement of our bodies until it felt like we'd been here for hours, days—and still, neither of us wanted it to stop. But eventually, it became too much. With a skilled hand coming down to stroke my clit, Dane drove me to another earth-shaking orgasm, and my spasms against him drove him over the edge, too.

In the aftermath, the two of us lay together in Dane's backseat, my head on his chest, his fingers idly running through my hair. All I could think to say after it all was, "Your car is so... clean."

Dane's laughter rumbled against me. "Yeah, well, it's my baby. Bought it with money from mowing lawns and helping my great-uncle in his auto shop, and it was in pretty rough condition then, so I fixed it up myself. It's hard to find classics like this in such good condition these days."

"Wow," I said, impressed with every new detail I learned about him. "You did that all by yourself?"

"Pretty much. But I'm used to doing stuff alone, so I kinda like it that way. Plus, I dig the mechanical stuff. It's probably what I'll end up doing after school, at least until I can make it big as a writer."

“But you have Bryce and Xander, so you’re not *really* alone,” I pointed out.

“Yeah, but they’re not around all the time. Honestly, it took me a while to even get close enough to them to consider them *my* people, anyway, especially with that dickhead whose name I won’t mention hanging around.”

I laughed but sobered up quickly. “Sounds like you were left to your own devices a lot.” It made a lot of his prickly, surly, I-hate-everyone stuff make more sense to me.

“That’s how it usually shakes out when your parents are addicts who didn’t want you. My gran is alright, but she was never that hands-on in raising me, either. She had to work, keep our bills paid.” He shrugged and started stroking my hair again. “We’ve lived very different lives, princess.”

“I know that. But...” I swallowed hard, unsure if I should say what I wanted to. Maybe it was just the post-sex hormones making me all mushy, but I decided I didn’t care if this blew up in my face. I told Dane sincerely, “I’m glad we found each other after everything.”

He kissed the top of my head, and I took that as his saying *Ditto*.

When Dane and I finally moved back to the front seats, accepting the fact that our date was over, I wished more than anything that he could just come home with me and snuggle up in my bed. But I knew that Aunt Lynette couldn’t be *that* cool, so I settled for keeping my hand on his thigh as we drove, running my fingernails across his firm muscles for a while until he growled at me to stop.

“Unless you wanna pull over, princess, you’ll keep your hands to yourself.”

But I took that threat as a challenge, taking his dick into my hand and stroking him slowly until he swore and stepped on the gas pedal.

When we made it to Aunt Lynette’s street, I had Dane stop a few houses down, directing him to park in front of a huge tree that blocked one of the neighbor’s houses. There, I leaned

over to take him into my mouth, sucking him deeply and sloppily like he deserved after planning such a memorable evening.

“Christ, Jade,” he gasped out when I licked him slowly from his balls to his tip, then swallowed him down hungrily, putting my lack of a gag reflex to the ultimate test. “You’re gonna make me bust all over my nice car.”

I slid off him with a wet, smacking sound, gave him a wicked grin, and said, “Not if you come down my throat.”

With another minute or so of my mouth’s ministrations, that’s exactly what he did. I drank him down eagerly, watched him come down from the high with immense pride in what I’d done. Then I kissed him hard, thanked him for the date, and went inside to greet my aunt.

“Finally,” Aunt Lynette exclaimed when I crossed the threshold and announced my presence to her.

This time, I’d warned her I’d be out late first so she wouldn’t worry. I told her I was tired and wanted to head up to bed, so we didn’t talk long, but she did take a second to look me over, noticing the sex-mussed hair I’d tried to straighten up. At least she couldn’t see that I’d left my panties out in the woods, and I’d already checked that Dane hadn’t left me with any visible hickeys. Still, I could have sworn she knew *something* about my eventful date with Dane when she asked me in a low voice with a smirk, “Have a nice night, Jade?”

“Yeah,” I answered weakly. I called goodnight to her as I hurried up the stairs, thinking of Dane, of Xander, of Bryce and the big mess of feelings I was developing for all of them. *I had one of the best nights of my life, Aunt Lynette—scratch that. The best whole week.*

JADE

“Jade, over here!” Leah called to me from the bleachers, waving me over to sit with her and a cute guy she’d been seeing whom I’d yet to meet. That was changing tonight, and I was a little nervous about her hanging out with Xander, Dane, and Bryce for the first time, too. At least she’d already met Dane that day in the cafeteria, and Bryce was going to be a little busy on the football field for a while. It was the night of the homecoming game, and we were all here to cheer him on to victory.

I hugged Leah when the guys and I made it to the great seats she’d snagged for us, and she introduced me to Aiden, her new boy toy.

“Nice to meet you, Aiden,” I said to the cute redhead she was apparently on the way to dating. He smiled at me and agreed, but then his kind eyes found my companions and went a little wide.

I swallowed down my anxiety. “And um, Aiden, you might already know these guys are Xander and Dane. We’re all here to watch Bryce Fisher play.”

“Yeah, uh, hey,” Aiden greeted the guys tentatively. “Hey, Leah, I’m gonna go grab some popcorn. You want anything?”

“Aw, you hear that, Jade? My boo’s getting me popcorn. And some *Twizzlers*, too!”

Aiden laughed as he scurried away. I frowned.

“Something wrong, princess?” Dane asked me as he took his seat. He and Xander chose to sit in the empty space on the row behind me so I could sit next to Leah, since the rest of our row was already crowded with excited football fans. Dane idly picked up the ends of my hair, playing with it, while Xander encouraged me to lean back against his knees.

“All good,” I lied, though I was worried as hell that this whole event would be awkward. It wasn’t easy to integrate two newly-reformed bullies into the general school populace after they’d tormented most of them for years.

When Aiden came back, though, Xander and Dane greeted him like they were already good friends. Though Leah and Aiden both seemed a little surprised by the warm welcome at first, by the time the game started, we’d all settled into a friendly camaraderie.

“Maybe this is why people like sports,” I mumbled to Leah as we watched our guys in an animated conversation about the upcoming game. She laughed and agreed, and soon, the game began.

Amid the electric buzz as the game began, I found myself spellbound by the sheer force and grace of Bryce Fisher. He was always impressive, with his bold personality and sheer sexual magnetism, but on the football field, he was a star. His movements were a dance of controlled power, an intricate choreography that left me in awe. I found myself cheering twice as loudly as the rest of the crowd at all the right moments, not caring that Dane and Xander made fun of me about how little I understood.

“I know what a touchdown is!” I yelled at them after a particularly good one, and we all laughed. My knowledge of the actual rules of the game was limited, but Bryce’s talent transcended it. There was an artistry to it, a symphony of strength and strategy that left me breathless.

As the cheers of the crowd enveloped us, I marveled not only at Bryce’s physical prowess but at the way he seamlessly melded with his teammates. You could tell he had a strong bond with the other players and that they all adored him in

turn. In a moment between plays that seemed to defy the fierce air of competition, Bryce removed his helmet, searching for us in the crowd. When he found us, he caught my eye and, with a mischievous grin, blew a playful kiss my way. It was a gesture both sweet and daring, a tiny romantic spark that ignited a warmth in my chest. In that fleeting moment, amid the roar of the crowd and the rhythmic thud of cleats against the field, I couldn't help but feel the stirrings of something deeper. A growing affection that was only magnified by my feelings for the two guys in the stands with me, too. Somehow, we were *all* a team at that moment.

The game finished with the ultimate triumph. When the final score showed our team demolished the other, Xander, Dane, and I all hugged, jumping up and down on the metal bleachers in a way that couldn't have been terribly safe, but we didn't care. When we broke apart, I joined Leah, Aiden, and my guys in a chorus of cheers and applause. The night was alive with energy, and I couldn't help but feel a sense of belonging with these guys by my side. Now we just had to get Bryce to complete it.

We made our way down the bleachers slowly, weaving through the jubilant crowd as best we could without falling on our asses. I stumbled once, but Xander caught me, sneaking a quick kiss while I was in his arms since no one was looking. When we were on flat ground again, I walked between Xander and Dane, each of them holding one of my hands, and I couldn't even bring myself to worry about what people might think of us. Together, the three of us laughed and bantered about Bryce's standout plays and my inability to follow any of it, celebrating the victory together.

"At least he looks damn cute in his uniform," I told the guys after they'd spoken a string of near-nonsense sports words for nearly two whole minutes. They both rolled their eyes at me, but they were smiling, too.

As we approached the field to meet Bryce, who was still being showered in praise from his teammates and about a dozen other students, the air felt light and carefree. I could feel

the warmth radiating from Xander and Dane, and I reveled in our playful touches and exchanged glances.

“Bryce, you killed it out there!” I exclaimed, running up and wrapping my arms around him. He was still sweaty, but I didn’t care the second his strong arms went around me, squeezing me tight.

Bryce laughed, deep and loud like Santa Claus, spinning us around and lifting my feet off the ground. “Hey, Jadie! It’s all because of you! You’re my good luck charm!”

“Wow, *the* Bryce Fisher giving someone else credit for his big win? Did we accidentally walk into some kind of alternate universe where he’s humble?” Dane joked, and Bryce flipped him off, which just made the rest of us laugh.

“You ready to go, champ?” Xander asked Bryce, who immediately started to complain about how he was *starving* and *needed to replenish all those calories*, so it was a good thing the plan was to go to a diner with Leah and Aiden.

“You guys are buying, right?” I said as we all walked together. This time, I was holding Bryce’s arm and Xander’s hand. “Wait, scratch that. Xander is buying, obviously. Isn’t that right, Daddy?” I joked.

From behind me, I felt a sting on my backside. I looked back to see that Dane had smacked my ass playfully, and I gave him a look of feigned outrage. “Hey! Watch it, bad boy.”

“You can’t go calling someone else Daddy, princess,” he said by way of explanation, and I immediately felt my cheeks warm at his scolding. He was remembering our first date too, clearly, because his eyes were dark flames when he said, “You’ll hurt my feelings.”

The mood shifted when a familiar voice cut through the cheers, a voice I hadn’t expected to hear tonight, or ideally, ever again.

“What the fuck?” came the slurred voice of none other than Owen Prescott. Sure enough, when I turned toward the sound, Owen stumbled toward us, a sneer on his face and his prep school buddies trailing behind like obedient lackeys.

“What’s going on here, Hannah?” Owen slurred, his gaze landing on my and Xander’s intertwined fingers, then moving quickly to the arm I had linked with Bryce’s. Dane came forward, squaring his shoulders like he was ready to fight, and Owen’s eyes went wide, even as his brows stayed in an angry squiggle on his forehead.

“It’s Jade now,” Bryce corrected him, and I looked up at him with a loving gaze, mouthing a silent, *Thank you*.

“Oh, *now* I see what’s going on here,” Owen said slowly.

“Somehow, I doubt it,” Xander quipped, but Owen was staring right at me, paying his traitorous friends no mind.

“Those pictures of you and Dane on social media, Jade? *Really?* And now you’re hanging all over all three of my best friends?”

Dane, ever the defiant one, corrected him with a smirk. “You and I were never friends, asshole.”

“And we’re not anymore,” Bryce piped up, his usually sunny face contorted in anger. “Not since you treated Jade like shit.”

“What they said,” Xander deadpanned.

Owen’s jaw clenched and his already-booze-flushed cheeks got even redder, but I intervened.

“Owen, you and I aren’t together anymore, and you were screwing all of my friends when we were. So frankly, this is none of your business.”

My shitty ex, fueled by liquid courage, let out a laugh I could only describe as maniacal. “Yeah, well, fuck you, *Hannah!* You were just some stupid bitch anyway! I never should have gotten with you to begin with!”

I felt the anger boiling inside me, but before I could respond, Dane’s temper flared. He moved as if to strike Owen, but Xander and Bryce stepped in, preventing a potential brawl. I shrieked, and the tension hung in the air like a storm about to break, not yet resolved.

“Yeah, that’s right, *Jade*,” Owen sneered, laughing with his cronies. “Hope you have fun being their little slut all the time. Nobody’s gonna want you for real now.”

Unexpectedly, Xander’s usually cool demeanor shattered. He strode forward in two quick steps and threw a punch at Owen, connecting with a resounding thud. We didn’t stick around for the aftermath.

“Oh, shit!” one of Owen’s friends yelled, and he’d mirrored my thoughts exactly. Bryce and Dane pulled Xander back into the fold with us, and then the four of us fled the scene to the sound of Owen’s pissed-off swearing. We ran until we reached the parking lot, and by then, our laughter echoed, following us all the way to Xander’s shiny car, where we piled in, peeling away into the night, letting Owen Prescott eat our collective dust.

XANDER

“I’ve never punched anybody before.” I laughed when Jade, Dane, and I were all back in the comfort of my basement. Having fled the scene of my assault on Owen Prescott, Jade had to text her friend Leah to let her know we couldn’t come to dinner after all. Bryce was getting a shower in the other room, so we’d been tasked with picking a movie for all of us to watch. I wanted to go with something like *Interstellar*, but Dane only ever wanted David Fincher movies, and Jade was campaigning for us to watch *Shrek 2* for some reason. Honestly, that last one would probably be Bryce’s top pick, so I planned to make sure we picked something unanimously before he was out.

“First time for everything,” Jade said with a wink. She continued with, “I’d never fucked three dudes at once before recent events, either.”

That made us all crack up even harder.

We ordered Chinese food while Bryce was still washing off his football-grime, and it wasn’t until we were all eating it together and watching a couple of episodes of *Love Island*, which we all secretly loved, that we even thought about Owen again. When a verbal confrontation on the second episode of the show reminded Jade of the after-homecoming spat, she turned off the TV, helped Dane clean up the now-empty takeout containers, and turned to the three of us with a serious expression.

“I’m so, so sorry about that shit with Owen, you guys,” Jade told all of us. She came to sit on the ottoman so she could face us where we were all together on the couch. “I didn’t mean for my drama to affect you guys so much, and I swear that’ll be the end of it, okay?”

“You can’t promise that, Jadie,” Bryce reassured her, his voice gentle. “It’s okay. We chose to get involved.”

“Just like we chose to get involved with you,” I agreed. “And I’d do it again, no question.”

She looked at me, then, and gave me a heartbreaking smile.

“I know. And I’m so glad you guys chose me. Thank you all so, so much for standing up for me the way you did. It means everything to me. More than you could ever know.”

She stood up suddenly and darted over to kiss me on the cheek, a sweet moment that shouldn’t have filled my head with dark thoughts, but I couldn’t help myself where Jade was concerned. Luckily, her mind was headed in the same filthy direction.

“I’d like to thank you all properly, if you’re interested,” she said, looking at each of us in turn with what could only be described as bedroom eyes. Of course, none of us had any protests. She reached out her hands to Bryce and me, both seated on either end of the sofa. At Jade’s direction, our hands in hers, we came to sit closer together on either side of Dane, the three of us lined up for her pleasure. I didn’t know exactly what she was thinking, though, until she started to unbutton her jeans, swaying her hips as she slowly peeled them off.

Jade was giving us a strip show. And we, her captive audience, were the luckiest bastards who’d ever lived.

She removed her clothes slowly, carefully. First the pants, then her top, leaving her standing in front of us in a matching bra and panty set—bright red, like our school colors. It stood out perfectly against her creamy skin. We all admired her perfect body, the dramatic slope of her waist down to her flared hips, the full, delectable curve of her breasts in a push-

up bra she didn't need. I could even see the golden dusting of hair right above the waistband of her panties, hinting at the treasure beneath. Not for the first time, I thought she must be a dream. That only felt truer when she undid her bra and freed those huge, succulent tits, cupping them in her hands for only a teasing second before she moved to shimmy out of her panties. I groaned at the way her breasts bounced and swayed with her movements, itching to have them in my hands, my mouth.

When she was fully naked, a goddess of fertility come to please us from some other ethereal plane, the perfect cleft of her pussy drawing all of our eyes, she knelt on the carpet in front of me and reached for the front of my jeans. Jade started to undo it with her smooth, skilled hands while she smiled up at me through her long lashes.

“You were so brave, standing up to that jerk like that,” she said to me, almost a whisper. “And sexy, too. So masculine and strong. Made me wet just watching.”

By now, she'd gotten my zipper all the way down, and when she pulled my cock out of my underwear with her small, soft hand, I was already getting hard for her. I swallowed as she started to jerk me off, licking her lips in preparation for what she had planned next. I heard Bryce whisper a quiet, “Fuck.”

“You'll be next,” Jade said, locking eyes with Bryce. “You're a winner, baby, and you've earned your prize.”

There was something so deliciously depraved about her talking to him in such a normal way while she was gripping my cock with such perfect pressure, moving slowly up and down as my length and girth grew in her hand. Playfully, she leaned forward to quickly lick the head, making it twitch. She switched so she was gripping it with her other hand, freeing the first one up as she reached for Dane next. He sighed when she pulled his fully-hard, uncut erection out for all of us to see.

“Somebody's ready,” she murmured, leaning in to kiss the thick head of Dane's dick. All three of us swore at the slow, sensual way she moved, the pure eroticism of her confidence

and control, and Dane even tried to thrust up into her mouth. Jade pulled back, though, making a scolding *tsk* noise. “Not so fast, Daddy. I wanna make this good for all of you.”

Jade began a torturous, teasing game with each of us, using her perfect lips for evil that felt so good. She started by sucking me, slow and steady, not quite as deep as we all knew she could go. Just as the pressure was starting to build, urging me to finish in her mouth, she’d pull off me and move to suck Bryce’s cock instead, skipping over a clearly-frustrated Dane.

But just as Bryce was getting too happy, clearly on the verge of orgasm, Jade did another switch, going to suck Dane down her eager throat. This cycle continued a few times until all of us were panting, groaning, practically begging her for more.

But one thing about me? Xander Townsend didn’t beg. No, I was built to take control, and as sexy as it was to see our once-shy new girl coming into her sexual power this way, it was just about time for me to take it back.

While Jade blew Bryce’s mind with her perfect dick-sucking lips, I took this break as an opportunity to stand up, coming to loom behind her. I watched her head bob and Bryce’s eyes grow wide as I stripped off my shirt and threw it onto the floor. When I dropped my pants, too, Jade heard the sound and pulled her wet mouth off Bryce, trailing a string of saliva with her as she turned around.

God, she was gorgeous, looking up at me with her wet lips, her flushed cheeks. I watched that blush spread over her skin as she became bashful at my closeness. I reined in my lust enough to speak clearly, unwavering as I gave her the order. “That’s enough, Jade. Bryce won the game tonight, and it’s time to give him his real prize. Take off his pants and get in his lap.”

She was clearly too turned on to argue. A shame, since I liked when she played the brat. But when she was straddling Bryce, his pants now on the floor, his torso bared ever since he’d showered, I wrapped my arms around Jade from behind. She yelped as I pulled her against me, her back pressed to my

front, my rock-hard dick finding its way to the cleft of her ass. I resisted the urge to thrust into her, though, because I had something else in mind.

“Here’s what’s going to happen, Jade.” I spoke low in her ear, just loud enough so my friends, who were both watching with wide eyes, could still hear me. “You’re going to ride Bryce’s cock like a good girl as a reward for how hard he played. But I’m going to hold you the whole time, and I’m going to guide you so you can’t speed up or slow down without my say. So relax in my arms, love, and don’t you dare try to take back control.” I could hear her breath catch, so I flicked out my tongue to trace the shell of her ear, earning me another little delicious intake of breath. “You’re going to remember who’s in charge here, hmm? You’re going to remember that you’re *my* little slut, *ours*, and we’re the ones who call the shots.”

JADE

O^{urs.} The simple, certain possession of that could have flooded my pussy with need if I weren't already dripping. Before I could even process what this meant, Xander was giving more orders, and there was no room in my head for thoughts more complex than *more*.

"Grab Bryce's cock, Jade, but just hold it. Don't stroke him or try to put him inside you until I say so."

Slowly, I reached for Bryce and lightly gripped his throbbing erection, looking into his warm golden-brown eyes as I did so. He smiled in a way that said *We're in this together, baby*.

"Dane, you wanna watch our Jade take all of Bryce's cock, don't you?"

"Fuck yeah," Dane agreed, leaning in closer to get a better look.

"Why don't you touch yourself while she does it? Give her an eyeful of what she can't have yet."

"Evil," I grumbled, which made Xander laugh. He leaned in to trail his teeth over my pulse point, making me shiver.

"You haven't seen evil yet, Jade Wells. By the end of the night, you're gonna be begging for us to *stop* making you come."

“Bring it on,” I gritted out as Xander adjusted his hold on me, pulling my arms up and over his head, ordering me to lace my fingers together. I obeyed, locking my hands together behind his head, right against his soft hair. His long arms crossed over my torso, one hand coming to land on one of my tits, squeezing it possessively, while his other hand grabbed my hip. This was how he’d guide my thrusts, the speed and depth of Bryce’s cock inside me. With a nod, he communicated to Bryce to position himself at my opening, and Bryce obeyed, letting out a satisfied hiss when he made the smallest contact with my wetness.

I wanted to rub myself against him, but Xander’s hold was strong and restrictive. All I could freely move was my head. I looked over at Dane, who was smirking as he ran his hand lazily up and down the substantial length of his cock, putting on a casual private show.

This was the hottest thing that had ever happened to me. At least until Xander began to guide me lower, helping me impale myself on Bryce further. The delicious stretch made me moan, and Xander began using his strength to lift and lower me, simulating the thrusts I’d be making on my own. Being completely at his mercy was its own kind of pleasure, and I found myself approaching orgasm in no time at all, especially once Xander’s hand began massaging my nipple, squeezing and pinching it in time with how he moved me.

But when my muscles started to tense around my thighs and my breath became erratic, harbingers of my climax, Xander slowed my pace, pulling me almost completely off Bryce’s dick and only lowering me enough to tease. The thick head inside me barely brushed my G-spot, and I screamed in frustration when Xander pulled me away from it, withholding what I really wanted.

“Do you want to come, Jade?” Xander asked me, breathless with his own unaddressed desire, which was still making itself known at my back.

“Yes, fuck, please,” I half-sobbed. Xander guided my hips through a few faster, harder motions that almost got me there, but then the damn tease pulled me back again.

“Not until Bryce comes,” Xander proclaimed, pinching my nipple again. Perfect torture. “Bryce, you close?”

“Getting there,” Bryce grunted out, his eyes locked on the place where our bodies were connected. “Gonna need her to fuck me hard and fast to finish.”

“Well, then,” Xander said carefully, rocking my hips with his hands so that I got a little extra friction while I was only part of the way down Bryce’s shaft. “Let’s give him what he wants, hmm? Dane, get her clit. She’s been a good girl. Our Jade deserves to come.”

All at once, Dane’s skilled hand came over to play with my pussy, trailing my slickness around my clit in perfect circles to lubricate it before he started to apply the right pressure. I was aching for him in seconds, and then he and Xander worked together to drive me to ecstasy alongside Bryce. Xander used his strength, so much more than you could tell from his slim frame, to slam me down onto Bryce, burying him deep, so deep inside me, again and again. At the same time, Dane kept his hand working on my clit, and even Bryce’s hand came up to toy with my other nipple at the same time. We were all panting, sweating with the effort, the sheer, overwhelming pleasure of it all, when I felt Bryce finally twitch inside me, shooting his load deep within my channel.

“Oh, *fuck*,” he groaned as he jerked his hips up into me at the same time, an involuntary, primal thrust. As his seed’s heat coated my inner walls, I finally felt my own orgasm come to its finishing peak, and I scream-sobbed as Xander kept me thrusting on Bryce all the way through the waves of it.

I thought we were finished, then, but Xander and Dane had other ideas. Together, they pulled me like a ragdoll off Bryce. I felt his cum dripping out of me as they repositioned.

Xander ended up sitting where Dane had been, now, and Dane stood behind me, helping me to straddle Xander’s lap. Bryce, naked and smiling, watched from the other end of the couch, happily sated and soft, though his expression said he wouldn’t be out of the game long.

“Dane,” Xander started in a casual tone, looking over my shoulder to meet his friend’s eyes. “Did you bring what I told you to?”

I heard the grin in his voice when he said, “Damn right.”

Xander pulled me into a deep kiss, maybe as a distraction, as Dane moved away. I heard rummaging, and then he was at my back, placing a familiar, gentle hand on my waist from behind. I felt them pass something between their hands, and when I pulled away from the kiss, Xander was holding a bottle of lube.

“If you’re interested, Jade, I’d like to fuck your ass tonight.”

I wasn’t sure I’d ever blushed this hard. Before I could talk myself out of it, think of all the reasons it was scary or too unknown, I gave Xander a quick, frantic nod, swallowing down my doubts. He kissed me again and pulled back smiling.

In seconds, Xander showed his strength again, flipping me around so I was facing Dane. Once again, my back was to Xander’s chest, though this time, he let me move freely, and I got to drink in the view of a full-frontal Dane Schwartz, his body covered in sexy, dark hair, his uncircumcised cock engorged and red with need. All that need, I knew, was for me. I needed it, too.

Xander was careful, gentle as he started to prepare my ass. A few squeezes of lube on his graceful fingers, and then he was working my tight hole in a gentle, erotic massage. When he inserted his finger inside me, it took a second to get used to the sensation, but Xander whispered naughty promises in my ear, and in a few moments, I was rocking back against his hand, begging for more.

“You take it so good in your sweet little ass,” Dane told me, watching this scene play out. He stroked his cock with his hand a few times, rough and ready, and then he took a step forward. “Can’t wait to be buried in your pussy while he fucks you, too. We’re gonna fill you up so good, princess, you won’t be able to walk straight for a week.”

I moaned at his words, gripping my own tits and massaging them for some relief. Xander inserted a second finger with yet more lube, and I hissed as I adjusted.

“Oh, she’s gonna be so hot,” Bryce said from the other end of the couch. I looked over to see he was watching, positioned in such a way that I couldn’t see if he was already getting hard again or not, but his eyes were certainly full of desire. “You gonna take both their cocks like a pro, baby?”

“Fuck yes,” I gasped when Xander removed his fingers and gently, oh, so gently, pressed the head of his cock to my hole instead. I was impatient, ready to experience double penetration from these two gorgeous men—and hell, maybe Bryce would be ready soon, too—but Xander was always sensible. He took his time working me up to his fucking my ass.

It hurt, at first. And it took so much time, so many reminders to “Just relax,” to get to a point where it didn’t hurt for him to move inside me. This time, even though I was on top, Xander gave himself the control again, holding me in place while he gave me a couple of short, quick thrusts from below. I moaned and spread my legs wantonly for Dane to see just how much this turned me on.

“That’s it, Jade. So perfect and tight. You ready for Dane to take your pussy, too?” He was genuinely asking, checking in on me.

“Yes, God,” I sighed as Xander gave me a slow thrust from below. I locked eyes with Dane and told him, without an ounce of shame, “Please, Daddy, come fill up my pussy with your thick cock.”

He let out a bark of laughter and said, “You don’t have to tell me twice.” Then, with his signature roughness, Dane plunged himself inside me all the way to the hilt.

“Oh, *fuck*,” I cried out, savoring the new perfection of this level of stretch. Xander held still while he gave Dane a chance to get a rhythm going, and when Dane’s pace settled at a quick, perfect pattern of thrusts, Xander finally moved again. He grunted behind me as he lifted his hips, and after a few

strokes, the guys found a perfect synchronicity. Their thrusts complimented each other, enslaving me to the drive of their hips. I felt tears streaming down my face, heard myself nearly babbling with the all-encompassing pleasure they were giving me.

When I came again, hard and long, each of the men fucking me in a way that perfectly extended and heightened my pleasure, I screamed louder than I ever had. I could have sworn every cell of my body felt like it was exploding in this new level of ecstasy. Even the aftershocks, the twitching spasms of my inner muscles, were more intense than I'd ever felt before. I was sobbing when Xander finished inside me, then Dane, and even Bryce found himself tipping over the edge soon enough, coming over to spurt his seed onto my chest at my request. Each of my guys helped me clean up and kissed my tears away when we were done.

I'd never felt more treasured, more *loved*, than when Bryce carried me with them up to Xander's bedroom. All four of us snuggled into silky-soft, thousand thread count sheets, a cuddle puddle of epic proportions. A silly thought struck me when we were all settled in, and I couldn't help but giggle.

"What are you laughing at, Jadie?" Bryce asked me from where I lay partially on top of him. Dane stroked my hair from the other side, and Xander lay with his legs tangled with mine.

"I was just thinking," I started, then had to stop with another giggle. When it subsided, I told them, "Maybe you guys should fight my ex more often if you'll all fuck me like *that* afterward."

There was more laughter, and sweetness, and gentle teasing that felt like pure affection, a stark contrast from the way we'd been when we first met. All three of the guys—*my* guys for sure, now—were so much kinder than I'd once thought them capable of, even if only with me and in moments like these. Sometime before we all fell asleep, I let myself realize the truth—that I was falling in love with the three of them, from a treacherous, steep height, and I wasn't sure if there would be a way to get back up in the end.

JADE

Somehow, in the whirlwind of dating and fucking and falling in love with three different boys at the same time, the days went on as normal. Time passed, and now the night of the homecoming dance had finally arrived. How had it been so long since that first day at Coldwater, when so much had changed?

The school day passed in a rush, and a swirl of nerves and excitement coursed through me when it was time to start getting ready for the dance. Leah, radiant in a bright magenta gown that was perfect on her deep skin tone, joined me at my aunt's house so we could share the process together. She did the perfect best-friend job of helping with my hair and complimenting me, throwing in a couple of excited "slays" as I slipped into a shimmery golden-yellow dress that complimented my box-dye red.

"Oh, honey, you look so beautiful," Aunt Lynette said when I was all dressed, getting a little teary in a way I hadn't often seen. "Let me go get my camera, girls. It'll only take a minute!"

"Of course she still has a non-phone camera," Leah said, laughing. "Your aunt is adorable."

"I think it's nostalgic for her." I laughed along with my friend.

Aunt Lynette didn't find the camera she was hoping to use, but after some convincing that cell phones were just fine, she still couldn't resist capturing the moment with a flurry of

pictures. She posed us a few different ways, laughed heartily at our “let’s do a silly one” attempts, and she showed us some of the snaps when she was done. The happiness in those pictures reflected a joy I hadn’t known before. It shone as brightly as my and Leah’s dresses, and though I wouldn’t say it out loud, I knew a big part of it was about my guys.

That was what I had taken to calling them all the time, lately, even out loud to Aunt Lynette. When exactly did Xander, Bryce, and Dane become my guys, officially? Was there a specific moment when the switch flipped, maybe when they first agreed to take my side against Owen? These days, it felt like they’d always been there, always been a simple fact of my life that even Aunt Lynette accepted. She’d even invited them all over for dinner, though I hadn’t yet taken her up on that offer. It was way too soon.

Soon enough, the doorbell rang, announcing Xander’s arrival. Leah squealed, and I shushed her as I nervously made my way downstairs. But surprise of all surprises, when I opened the door, he wasn’t alone.

“My lady,” Xander said, struggling to hold back the twitch in his lips but maintaining his perfect Townsend stoicism somehow, “Your chariot awaits.”

He gestured to the front of the house, where a stretch limo awaited us, and to my delight, Bryce and Dane stepped out of it, too. All three of my guys were wearing black suits with small accents in the same golden-yellow hue as my dress—Xander in a yellow bowtie, Bryce with a regular tie that made him look dashing, and Dane casually cool with a sport coat and just a flash of yellow in his pocket square.

They were all there for me, a gesture so sweet and unexpected that I couldn’t help but laugh in delight. Even Dane, who claimed to despise dances, had endured it all for my sake. I kissed each of them briefly so as not to scandalize my aunt—or even Leah and Aiden, who were sharing the limo with us—and made a mental note to thank them all more thoroughly the second we could be alone.

There was no awkwardness as we all rode together to the dance. Our big limo joke was to pretend like Dane wasn't just non-conformist and too cool for something as cheesy as a homecoming dance, but that he actually had a strange phobia of dancing. We all dissolved into laughter each time the joke came up, the camaraderie between us all successfully demolishing Dane's stoic outer walls.

"You dorks are lucky I'm cool with being seen with you," Dane joked, but he was smiling, bright and friendly, by the time we pulled up to Coldwater High.

Having been to fancy Worthington Academy dances in the past, I didn't expect a lot from a public school gym. But it looked surprisingly lovely, and I was sucked into the magic regardless, the large room adorned with fairy lights and vibrant decorations, buzzing with the beats of music as we all entered together. Leah and Aiden split off to do their own thing almost immediately, which suited the rest of us fine.

Though I walked in on just Xander's arm, as we'd discussed originally, the other guys trailed behind me, and our matching outfits told everyone the truth about our relationship. We certainly caused a stir, whispers and stares following us like a trail of glitter. But I didn't care. I reveled in the dance, taking turns with each of my guys on the floor. Let our classmates call this what they wanted to. I was happy with our unconventional, still-unlabeled relationship, and no one could take it away from us.

About halfway through the night, at least by my skewed estimation, a well-liked faculty member took the stage at the end of the gymnasium. After some brief mic feedback that had us all plugging our ears, he cleared his throat and spoke into the microphone.

"Ladies, gentlemen, distinguished guests," his voice boomed. "It's just about time to announce this year's homecoming court!"

Our classmates hooted and hollered, excited to see who had won the second most important popularity contest after prom court. Xander, Dane, and I exchanged a look. All

together, we said, “Bryce will win,” and then we laughed at our prediction. Sure enough, Bryce was at the other end of the room, chatting with one of his dozens of adoring fans after the big homecoming game win. Now that he’d dropped the bullying, or at least heavily reduced it with help from his supportive friends and maybe-girlfriend, he was living out the perfect, popular high school jock role he was meant to have.

“Don’t forget to get in your final votes, everyone! The ballots will be counted and the winners decided by ten o’clock, sharp!”

Beyond supporting Bryce, I had no real interest in homecoming court, so during this announcement I strolled away to the refreshment table, grabbing myself a can of soda. Leah came up to me then, her eyes a little panicked behind the bejeweled glasses she’d worn for the occasion, which she’d deemed her “fancy frames”. She gave me a tight smile.

“You... wouldn’t happen to have a tampon, would you?” Leah asked me as quietly as she could manage in the loud room.

“Um, I don’t think so,” I said, double-checking the small clutch I’d brought just in case. I shook my head, shrugging in apology. While she was glancing around the room, looking for someone else she could ask, both our brains were working overtime. I felt like I was forgetting something, but what?

“Oh!” Leah exclaimed, relief coloring her tone. She was looking at her phone screen with a period-tracking app pulled up. “Oh, my gosh, duh. I was worried I forgot I was supposed to start my period, but I just realized I counted wrong. I’m supposed to start *next* week. Thank God.”

Her face fell, a rapid descent into worry, when she looked at me. I heard her next words as if through a tunnel. “Jade? You okay?”

Well, that was a big question. And the answer depended on one little answer I suddenly needed to know. Sensing my distress, Leah rushed me away from the dance floor, a good friend through and through.

She let me panic for a long few minutes, trying to calm my nonsensical rants as I looked at my phone and counted, recounted, recounted again. My own period app gave me no relief from the terror, and there was only one thing that would.

Within minutes, Leah and I were rushing out of the school, sneaking through an often-overlooked side exit Dane had shown me. We didn't have a car, since we'd started this seemingly perfect night in a limo, but there was a gas station just around the corner from Coldwater, and we had bigger problems to worry about than high heel-induced blisters right now. We'd walk. Run, if we had to.

"Don't panic, Jade," Leah told me in a reassuring tone as we half-sprinted, trying to avoid craggy spots in the sidewalk with our shoes. "We're gonna get you a test, and then you'll know, and everything is gonna be fine, okay?"

"Right," I echoed hollowly. I didn't have the capacity to try harder to sound normal right now. My mind was too busy spiraling about when I'd last had my period, swirling with the uncertainty of what awaited me on the other side of a store-bought pregnancy test.

DANE

I noticed Jade's absence from the dance like a missing note in a song, a dissonance that unsettled me. The pulsating lights and rhythmic beats of the music faded into the background as I scanned the crowded gymnasium. Panic gripped me as I searched for the fiery red hair that usually stood out like a beacon, finding only flashes of red dresses, no golden yellow in sight.

"Where the hell did she go?" I grumbled to myself, starting to cross the room in search of my friends. I spotted Bryce first, right up by the stage.

He'd been crowned homecoming king, of course, and that was how I first noticed our girl was missing. Jade would want to laugh about how we'd all been right, would want to cheer Bryce on as he accepted the crown with his usual lighthearted flair. But when I looked to make a joke to her, she wasn't by my side. Xander's, either. And soon, I'd scanned the room with my eyes enough times to know she wasn't anywhere in this godforsaken gymnasium.

In the aftermath of his crowning ceremony, Bryce was engulfed by well-wishers and admirers, mostly girls who didn't catch his attention at all. Even the objectively-hot cheerleader who had been crowned as his queen might as well have been invisible for all he noticed her. Maybe I was just projecting my own stress, but even in the midst of celebration, I caught a glimpse of a fleeting concern in Bryce's eyes. An unspoken question hung between us, a silent acknowledgment that something was wrong. *Someone* was missing.

I found Xander engrossed in a conversation with a chaperone about recommendation letters for Harvard. Precious seconds ticked away as I waited for him to finish kissing up, and finally, I was able to pull him away.

“What’s the deal, Dane?” Xander asked at first, but I cut off his question.

“Dude, I have no idea where Jade went. She’s gone.”

The moment I mentioned Jade’s disappearance, Xander’s focused expression faltered.

“Gone? Are you sure she’s not just... in the bathroom?”

“Fuck you, man. Obviously, I’m sure. She’s been gone way too long for it to be that.”

“No need for the attitude,” Xander told me, silencing me with a very paternalistic glare. “Let’s grab our king. Talk it over before we freak out any more.”

We grabbed Bryce the second we were able, and once we’d explained the situation to him too, the three of us shared a glance. It was one of the all-knowing, dramatic glances only lifelong friends could share. Instantly, the vibe morphed from the easygoing fun of the dance into one of shared urgency. I wasn’t sure what could have happened to Jade at a chaperoned school dance, but that didn’t stop me from worrying that something had happened to Jade. Something terrible, my pessimistic brain said, but I tried to channel Jade’s optimism to counteract it.

That was a lot harder to do when she wasn’t fucking *here*.

Frantic searches ensued. Bryce, Xander, and I looked like total freaks, weaving through the labyrinth of people, calling out for Jade to no avail. It was Leah’s date who finally revealed the truth—he’d seen Jade and Leah leave the gym, and then he’d gotten a text from his date.

“She, uh, apologized, of course,” the kid stammered. He was clearly still afraid of us in this context, and honestly, we were all giving off such feral energy, I probably would have been scared in his shoes, too. “But Leah said there was some

kind of emergency and they had to go. Something with Jade, I guess?”

Anger surged within me like a tempest, threatening to consume me even as anxiety still warred for its place in the storm. We all reached for our phones, fingers flying across screens to text Jade, only to be met with an unexpected group message from a number we didn't know.

HEY, guys, this is Leah! Sorry to freak y'all out, but Jade didn't feel well and I helped her get home bc her phone was dying. She misses u guys! <3

RELIEF WASHED over all of us in a gentle wave, the typical push-pull of the tide, but I couldn't shake the feeling that something was off. Jade, always so fiercely independent, still would have at least texted us herself before running home to her aunt's house.

The uneasy sensation lingered, an echo of the past suspicion that had led me to confront Jade about her old school, her old life. I'd known then that something wasn't right, too—that there was more to the story. I knew by now to trust my instincts, and right now, they were screaming at me. My girl wasn't okay, and this wasn't over.

JADE

I'd done the scariest possible task. I'd peed on the stupid stick—or rather, sticks. Three of them, to be exact. I'd waited the excruciating three minutes or so that each package had asked for, and I'd looked, even though I was terrified to do it. And every single one had the same result.

In some kind of cruel joke from the universe, I was pregnant.

I was still in disbelief. I'd always been so careful, had never had so much as a scare in all the time I was with Owen. I took my pill every night, and Owen and I had always used condoms.

But of course, when the guys, *my* guys, had entered the picture, all of my good sense had flown right out the window. For once, I'd trusted someone enough to let go of my need to always be so safe, so careful, because I felt safe in their arms. And in my pleasure-induced delirium, I must have missed a pill or two in my pack.

Now, as I paced my room at Aunt Lynette's house, so much cozier than the larger room I'd had at the home I'd lived in with my parents, I decided to check. I grabbed my pill pack from the nightstand, and with shaking hands, I opened it.

The proof was right there. My days were all screwed up, and my period was late, and somehow, seeing the evidence, even beyond the three pregnancy tests I'd hidden in the spare bathroom across from my room... it all became more real. Panic set in, cold and constricting in my chest, my throat. I

was eighteen and pregnant, the worst kind of melodramatic movie cliché.

I'd never even held a baby before. I'd taken care of horses, sure, but a human child... *fuck*. There was absolutely no way I was prepared to be a mother. With each new detail my brain thought of, I could feel myself freaking out even more. My hands tingled, an oncoming panic attack rearing its ugly head. What would I do about college? Choosing a career? God, what would my parents say when they found out? What would the guys say?

That last thought hit me full-force, and I almost wanted to throw up. What the hell was I going to tell Dane, Bryce, and Xander? I wasn't even sure who the father was.

Tears welled up in my eyes, spilling over in an unstoppable torrent. There was something especially terrible, borderline shameful, about having no idea which one of the *three* men I'd been having unprotected sex with had knocked me up. Which life I was going to ruin alongside my own. Which bright future I was going to derail. Would it be the promising trust fund prince with a future career as a human rights lawyer? The troubled young man who'd grown up with little money and even less love, repeating the cycle of unplanned parenthood before he could become a writer like he dreamed? Or the carefree sunshine boy who maintained an admirable sense of childlike joie-de-vivre, destined for a full-ride football scholarship?

I took a few deep breaths through my shaky sobs, forcing my mind to go quiet. I just needed quiet. Just for a minute, and then maybe this would all go away. Everything would go back to how it was before, perfect and happy and easy, just my guys and me.

When I calmed down, the situation hadn't changed, but I made a decision. I was so newly an adult myself, I needed guidance from someone older and smarter than me.

I found Aunt Lynette in the living room, reading a beat-up paperback book with her legs tucked up underneath her in her chair. I stopped in the doorway, too terrified to speak up.

Luckily, she noticed my presence herself and gave me a warm smile as she put her book down.

“Hey, honey. I was just reading one of those cheesy mysteries you used to like when you were a kid. The ones with the horse racing angle, remember?”

“I remember,” I said, my voice barely above a whisper. At my tone, she frowned.

“What’s wrong?” She watched my mouth open and close, the words I needed to say struggling to form on my lips. Aunt Lynette stood up and rushed over to me, gently tugging on my hands and pulling us both over to the couch. She urged me to sit, and then she asked again, “Jade, honey, it’s okay, whatever it is. Please, will you tell me what’s wrong? You know you can tell me anything.”

When I was finally able to choke out the words, “I’m pregnant,” the explosion my anxious mind had been waiting for didn’t come. Instead, Aunt Lynette’s kind green eyes softened even further, her grip on my hands tightening with a determined sort of love I really needed right now.

“Oh, my sweet girl. Who’s the father?”

That made me start crying. She seemed to understand instinctively that I had no way of knowing, because her eyes grew wider with surprise.

“Oh, you poor thing. You must be scared to death. Come here.”

For a long while, she hugged me to her chest and let me cry, the endless stream of tears and her sweet, reassuring words seeming to wash away the darkest pieces of my worry. By the time we were both able to talk, she’d put on her practical adult hat, exactly what I needed.

“You have options, you know, Jade? You don’t have to be a mom if you’re not ready. I’m here for you whatever you choose, and—” She cut herself off, winced a little, then started again. “I don’t have to tell your mom and dad, okay? If you decide to get rid of—”

“No,” I felt myself say before I’d made any conscious choice. I repeated it, growing surer with each second. “No, I... I don’t think I can do that. Me and my guys... this baby is ours.”

“You... want to keep it?” she asked me, not judging at all but making sure I was in my right mind.

“I don’t know,” I clarified. I ran my hand through my hair, having a silly thought that maybe if I did have this baby, maybe it could be a real redhead. Though I felt like I’d known them all my life, I didn’t actually know Bryce, Xander, or Dane’s family histories. I wasn’t sure about the guys’ genes or which of them would have contributed to this baby in the first place, so the possibilities seemed endless. It almost made me want to laugh. “I don’t know, Aunt Lyn. All I know is how I feel about the guys, and... they’re all so special to me. I don’t think I could stand to lose any part of them.”

God, I must be insane. I couldn’t seriously be considering having a baby when I wasn’t even finished with high school. Sure, nine months from now, school would be out for the summer, but could I really pregnant-waddle through the halls of Coldwater High, through senior prom and finals week, across the stage at graduation? And after everything, could I learn to be a mother to my baby *and* keep hold of the three men who were all, in my heart, the father?

“It’s clear that you love these boys a lot,” Aunt Lynette said carefully, breaking a long, poignant silence. And though I hadn’t said those words out loud even to myself, I knew it was true. I loved and was *in love with* Xander Townsend, Dane Schwartz, and Bryce Fisher. These three men who had awakened my body and my heart in such a short time, they were a part of me forever now. I nodded, confirming Aunt Lynette’s words.

“And I love *you*, kiddo, so you know I’ll be here for you whatever you decide. But if you really love Bryce, Dane, and Xander, and you’re thinking about... about having their baby, you have to talk to them about it. All of them. You know that, right?”

I did. Even before she said it, I knew she was right. I needed to talk to my guys about this crazy, scary, exciting new development in our lives, and though I knew each of them deeply in my soul, I still wasn't sure how that conversation would go.

BRYCE

It had been days since the homecoming dance, and the silence from Jade was deafening. Something had shifted, something bad that she was hiding from us, just the way she'd lied to us at the beginning of all of this. There was a change in the air that left Dane, Xander, and I all adrift in uncertainty, and damn it, I'd never felt anything like it in my life.

Jade came to class, as usual, still keeping up her perfect grades. But without blatantly blowing us off, somehow, she avoided the three of us at school, slipping through the hallways without a word or even her usual sassy smile. Even in class, her once vibrant spirit had been replaced by a quiet, distant version of herself. It may not have been very manly of me to admit, but I was fucking terrified that we were losing her.

In Spanish class, I held back, resisting the urge to tease her like I usually would. It felt wrong, like a piece of our puzzle had fallen between some cosmic couch cushions, never to be seen again. A gnawing worry crept in, a feeling that was completely foreign to me—maybe she had changed her mind about us, about the peculiar dance of emotions we had all stumbled into. Worse yet was the thought I had in my weakest moments—maybe Jade had realized how deep my feelings for her ran, and she was keeping her distance in an attempt to reject me with kindness.

After school, the void without Jade grew palpable. Xander, Dane, and I followed our routine, heading to Xander's

basement after the final bell, but the usual camaraderie felt strained without Jade's infectious laughter and sassy remarks. As we tried to play video games, the room echoed with a hollow emptiness. It was almost comical, hearing the computerized beeps and sound effects, such a silly contrast to the gloomy energy we were all stuck in.

I couldn't take it anymore. My chest tightened, and I could feel the unspoken worry etched on Xander and Dane's faces, too. Somebody had to say something, and damn it, I knew it had to be me.

"Guys," I said, my voice breaking the uneasy silence. All three of our characters in our game had died, and none of us even reacted to the big *GAME OVER* message. "I really, really hate to be the one making a big decision here. You know that kind of serious shit is not my speed. But... I think we need to go check on Jade. We can't just keep pretending everything's fine."

My two best friends exchanged glances, and Xander, always sort of our head honcho, nodded slowly. "You're right, Bryce."

"Damn, that may be the first time you've ever said that to me," I joked weakly, and we all exchanged a wan smile. The truth hung heavily in the air—Jade was important to us, more than we had admitted out loud yet. Our combined emotions had woven a complex tapestry, binding us to her in ways that defied easy explanation. "And while I'm saying mushy, hard shit..."

"Bit of an oxymoron," Dane quipped, but I ignored him.

"I think when we talk to her, we have to tell her how we feel."

There was no way the three of us would voice that out loud without Jade here to soften us up. But we'd been friends long enough to understand each other without words, so they both knew what I meant. We were in love with Jade, and she deserved to know that we all wanted to keep her, forever, just the way we were.

Once we'd all piled into Xander's car, we raced to Jade's aunt's house for the first time since the night of the dance, the night everything went wrong. When Jade answered the door, a haunted expression flickered in her eyes. Sick, scared, or both, I couldn't tell, but she definitely looked paler than usual, even her bright hair seeming dimmer.

"Guys," she said, her voice practically a sigh. One of relief or resignation, I couldn't tell, but it was just so good to hear her voice.

"Let us in, Jade," Xander said with his signature authority.

"We need to talk," Dane tacked on, and when she looked to me, I nodded at her through a worried smile. The air crackled with tension as she considered all three of us on her doorstep, biting her perfect lower lip that each of us had bitten before under much happier circumstances.

Jade hesitated, eyes flickering between us. But finally, she relented, opening the door wider. All four of us piled into her aunt's modest, cozy living room, me and the guys on the couch while Jade stood before us, hugging herself for reassurance. I wished she would let me do that, to be honest, but I needed to let her speak. I could never keep my thoughts straight when I was touching her.

"Jadie," I implored, my voice softer now, laced with concern. "Tell us what's going on. We're all going crazy here."

"We're not mad," Dane added, and Xander nodded.

"We're not upset with you, baby. We just need to know what's wrong so we can fix it."

She took a deep breath, her eyes welling with tears, though she stood up straighter as if deciding she wouldn't allow herself to cry. The still-hidden truth hung in the air like static, sparking over all of our skin, raising the hairs on my arms. Somehow, I think I knew my whole world was about to change. Just like it had changed when I first met Jade Wells in homeroom.

"I'm pregnant," Jade finally said, and the room seemed to spin.

DANE

To say it took me a minute to process Jade's words would be the world's biggest understatement. It felt like hours passed in the few seconds after she said the words *I'm pregnant*, and still, I wasn't even on the road to processing what this meant. For her, for me, for all of us.

Maybe it was willful ignorance, but for a long second, I couldn't even make the connection between this sentence and me. My thoughts were full of worries for Jade. What was she going to do? Was she feeling okay? How was she going to finish school, go off to college, work with horses like she dreamed?

But then the pieces clicked together, and all I could say was a tight, stressed-out, "Whose is it?"

Now, the tears she'd been holding back all this time spilled over, trailing down her lovely cheeks. It wasn't fair that she was still fucking gorgeous when she cried. She croaked out, "I don't know. It's—it's one of you guys, but... I have no clue which."

My ears were ringing. I couldn't bear to witness Jade's tears any longer. Without a word, I stood up from the couch and bolted toward the door.

"Dane!" Jade called after me, her teary voice breaking my heart—or it would if I allowed myself to acknowledge that I had one. Right now, I felt hard as stone, emotionless aside from the strong need to flee. She and my friends called after me as I made it through the front door. Since Xander had

driven, I left on foot, the weight of Jade's distraught protests lingering in the air even as I walked further and further from her aunt's house. The cool fall air bit into my skin as I walked, the rhythmic pounding of my footsteps echoing my inner turmoil.

I didn't even know where I was walking until my feet carried me someplace familiar. After what felt like years, I found myself outside the used bookstore I loved, a haven of dusty tomes and whispered possibilities that called to me even now. It was here, on our first date, that Jade and I talked about our dreams for the future for the first time. It made sense to come back here when it felt like all of those dreams were falling out of my reach at frightening speeds.

Not that they'd ever been that close to begin with.

Inside, the air smelled of aged paper and lemon floor cleaner, a hint of coffee from the old Keurig they had in the back room—I was here often enough that a few of the employees knew me by name, would share their coffee with me if I asked. My heart rate slowing to normal for the first time since Jade told us the news, I found solace among the familiar shelves. When I passed the cash wrap, a kindly employee with glasses and wisps of gray hair greeted me. I couldn't remember the old man's name, but he was one I'd definitely met before.

"Welcome in," he said to me in a friendly tone. "Looking for anything in particular? A gift for a sweet lady friend, maybe?"

His eyes twinkled knowingly. I blinked at him, realizing he had been in the store the night I'd brought Jade here, too, and that must be why he said this. *No, but she's got an unexpected gift for me, it seems. Well, maybe me. Maybe one of my friends. There's no way to know.*

"Oh-ho." He almost laughed at my expression, though not unkindly. "Just here to think, I guess? You look like you've got a lot on your mind. Perhaps you're in the last quarter of your story, when the plot reaches its climactic end!"

I barked a humorless laugh. "Yeah, something like that."

“Ah, young man,” the old man mused, peering at me over the rim of his glasses. “I won’t pretend to know what you’re going through, but would you care for some advice?”

I didn’t, of course, but if I ever wanted to come back to my favorite bookstore again, I probably should maintain a friendly rapport with the staff. I struggled not to roll my eyes as I gave him a weak wave, telling him to go on if he must.

“I’ve lived a long time, Son, and one piece of knowledge has helped me walk through all of life’s changes with a clear head and a sense of adventure. Life is like a good book, full of unpredictable twists and turns that keep us turning pages. Sometimes, we find ourselves in chapters we never expected to write, but there’s always a happy ending.”

Sure, it sounded like any other stupid platitude a side character might give to the protagonist of a shitty made-for-TV movie. But for some reason, his soothing voice and weirdly-applicable words seemed to release some of my tension anyway. “A happy ending, huh? Are you sure that’s always true? What if *my* life is a dystopian novel or a psychological thriller?”

He chuckled. “You’re one of those types, huh? A brooder? Who’s your favorite writer, McCarthy?”

I quickly shoved the copy of *Blood Meridian* I’d been holding back on the shelf, making the old man cackle.

“Don’t worry so much, Son. I can tell you’re living in a book with a happy ending. Maybe a romance, eh?” He bounced his overgrown eyebrows at me, laughing again when my expression soured. He waved a hand to dismiss my pessimism and delivered his final piece of wisdom. “You’ve got a lot of life left to live. A book unfolds page by page, and so does life. You’ve gotta learn someday to embrace the uncertainty! A story’s no fun if you know how it ends. It’s in life’s uncharted chapters that we discover our strength.”

As I wandered the aisles in the quiet, texts from Bryce and Xander lit up my phone, desperate, sometimes angry beacons calling me home. They were upset with me for leaving, for evading the discussion we desperately needed to have.

Nothing from Jade, but now that I'd calmed down, I understood why. My cowardly response had been the wrong one, apparently, and though I'd known that the second I started out Jade's aunt's front door, I'd done it anyway. I'd caused a rift, and I felt the pang of guilt settling in.

When I made it home that night to my grandmother's trailer, I lay on my small, uncomfortable bed with the faded flannel blankets, wrestling with the chaos inside me. The reality of Jade's pregnancy had set in, and my initial fear began to give way to something unexpected—excitement. A spark of warmth ignited within me at the thought of our family growing, regardless of the biological mystery of it all.

Jade, Bryce, and Xander had become my family, and the idea of our family expanding... there was something comforting in it, somehow. I'd known true loneliness before, and now that we were all together this way, I refused to return to that desolate place. The fear of being alone dissipated, replaced by a hope that we could make this work somehow, whatever Jade decided.

The frantic texts continued, the urgency in my friends' words tugging at my conscience. It was time to face the music, to confront this head-on. I wanted to be there for Jade in the journey that lay ahead. Our story might not follow a conventional plotline, but in the hushed aisles of the bookstore, I'd found the courage to embrace the unexpected, to trust that the happy ending would come.

JADE

If I thought high school was exhausting before, now that I was really dragging my ass due to early-stage pregnancy fatigue, it was nearly unbearable. And it didn't help that I was still struggling on the inside with how things went down when I told the guys about the baby.

Xander and Bryce hadn't been unkind to me, at least, though they'd been reluctant to talk in any real way while Dane was AWOL. Of course, he'd been missing from class today, too, leaving me to fret endlessly about him, whether he was okay, whether he'd ever speak to me again after this.

But as I was heading out at the end of the day, resigned to take the bus to Aunt Lynette's house, a familiar classic black beauty of an Impala pulled up next to me. The passenger side window rolled down, and maybe it was the hormones, but I wanted to weep with joy at the sight of Dane's face. He leaned across the seat, looking up at me with those beautifully complex, dark eyes. "Can I give you a ride home, beautiful?"

My heart stuttered in my chest, my breath catching at the endearment. But now that he was here and my initial relief at seeing him had faded, I wondered if I should go with him. Maybe I should be pissed off at how he'd abandoned me at the first sight of trouble.

"I can take the bus," I told him coolly, and Dane sighed.

"Look, I know I have a lot of explaining to do, and about a dozen apologies to make. But this isn't the best time or place to do that." He looked behind him as another car honked at

him to move out of the narrow drive in which he'd stopped. "So would you get in the car? I just want to go somewhere and talk. Make things right."

I only hesitated for another moment, and then I climbed into the Impala with Dane, an idea of where we were headed already forming in my head.

Sure enough, when we pulled up to Xander's house and headed to the basement, bypassing his parents who were actually home for once, all three of my guys were waiting for me on the same couch where we'd had mind-blowing sex more than once. *Our kid might have been conceived on that couch*, I thought, an anxious laugh bubbling out of me.

"Hey, Jadie." Bryce's sweet voice greeted me first, moving over so I could sit between him and Xander. I gave him a sheepish "hey" in response and did as he asked, having a vivid flash-forward to when it would be hard for me to sit down because of my huge belly. "Thanks for coming to see us."

As if I really had a choice. Rationally, I knew we weren't out of the woods yet with this whole pregnancy situation. But emotionally, I was still theirs, and maybe I always would be.

"What's this about?" I asked, genuinely wondering, though I had an inkling. The guys exchanged a look among themselves, then Bryce cleared his throat, deciding to step up to the plate first.

"Jade," he started softly, taking my hand into both of his. "We know you're going through something really big and fucking terrifying right now. And since we're the reason you're in this mess in the first place, we feel it's our job to... I don't know. Lighten the load, so to speak?" He winced at the potential innuendo, but he relaxed again when I laughed.

"Christ, I love the sound of your laugh," Bryce said then, taking me by surprise, and then more lovely, sweet words spilled out of his mouth like he'd broken a dam. "That's what this really is, Jade. It's love, right? Everything's been so crazy since you came into our lives, and the only thing with the power to wreck stuff like that is love. Not that you've wrecked anything!" he hurried to add, and then he laughed at his own

fumbling. “Sorry, I’m so bad at this. But what I’m trying to say, Jade, is that I love you. I love what we have, all of us together. I want to keep you, stand by you for as long as you’ll have me, and I wanna be there for you and your mini me whenever they’re out of the oven, if that’s what you want, too.”

His confession tore through me, leaving me lost for words and breathless. I gaped at him, but then Xander’s voice joined the fray, and I turned to look into his crystal blue eyes.

“I love you, Jade. I’m not sure I was even capable of real love before I met you. I’m still not sure I’m well-equipped to do it now,” he said, his serious face softening just enough for a tiny smirk to form on his lips. “But all I want, more than anything in this world, is to love you the way you deserve. I want you to be as happy as you make me whenever you walk into a room.” The smile that broke across his face now was beautiful, softening and highlighting his classic handsomeness until I could hardly believe my luck. I looked between Xander and Bryce, disbelieving the tentative joy threatening to explode through my chest.

Finally, Dane cleared his throat, coming to kneel in front of me so he could lay his hand over my knee. Just the touch of his hand was enough to make me start to cry, and his dark eyes softened to rich, dark chocolate when he noticed my tears.

“Don’t cry, baby,” Dane whispered, bringing his hand up to wipe the tears away with a featherlight touch. “I owe you an apology, and I want to make it as perfect as you are.

“Jade, you know this is hard for me. Hell, I have a habit of making a lot of things harder than they need to be, and you’re a saint for giving yourself to me, to us, despite that. I’m sorrier than I can ever express for running away from you in your moment of need. I promise, if you forgive me, if you’ll keep me in your life, I’ll never abandon you like that again.”

Was I seeing things, or were there tears forming in his eyes, giving the deep color an extra layer of sparkle? That just made me cry harder, and Dane shushed me calmly as he went on.

“I don’t have to tell you that shit hasn’t been easy for me. I’ve never really had anyone care for me the way you do, and it’s scary to let that love into my world for the first time. You’re the best thing that’s happened in my entire fucked-up life. All of you,” he said, looking around at his best friends on either side of me, too. But then he met my gaze again and said, “I love you, Jade. Christ, I love you so much I could burst. And if you decide to have this baby, I’ll love it, too. It’ll be all of ours. Fuck the genetics.”

Xander and Bryce nodded along, breaking my heart and putting it back together all at once. Each of their speeches was so perfect, exemplifying their differences and the reasons I loved each of them on their own, much less together, this magical foursome we’d never meant to find. The words burst out of me before I could even pretend to mull things over.

“I love you,” I gasped, looking at Dane, who broke, letting a single tear fall free. I turned to Xander and said it again, watching him melt as I said it. “I love you.” Finally, Bryce’s smiling face filled my vision, bright and warm as the sun, and again, I told him the truth. “I love you all. God, I love you guys so much. And... I think I already love this baby. Even though I know it’ll be hard to figure out the details, with all of us graduating and maybe going off to different schools, I really love the idea of raising a child with the three of you, seeing what great fathers you all would be...”

“And how cute a little Bryce would be,” Bryce butted in, making us all laugh and Dane shove him. “What? I’m right!”

Thanks to Bryce’s humor and all of our delirious happiness, our serious conversation devolved into more laughter, loving kisses from each of my boys, a warm group hug that wrapped me in safety and warmth. I sighed, marveling at the perfection of my life now that there were no more lies, only trust, affection, truth. It was so easy. There in the basement where I’d first given myself freely to these three wonderful men, I gave my heart to them again, secure in the knowledge that this was what it was like to be truly loved.

EPILOGUE: JADE

Almost Nine Months Later

The early-summer sun dipped low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the local park where my high school graduation party was in full swing. Laughter filled the air, fun music played on Xander's fancy smart speaker, a symphony of celebration for the four of us and our achievements. It had been a hell of a year, full of doctor's visits and attempts at assembling baby furniture and fielding judgmental looks from people who didn't matter, and there was love at the heart of it all. Through everything, Bryce, Dane, Xander, and I had actually done it, and we had the diplomas to prove it. We had officially crossed the threshold into the next chapter of our lives.

While I sat in the shade and nursed a glass of lemonade, resting my swollen ankles and sore *everything*, Aunt Lynette was manning the grill, turning over hot dogs and hamburgers of the real and vegan varieties to feed us all. Always taking care of me, taking care of all of us, in ways that our parents had largely failed to. My mom and dad were here somewhere, but they hadn't been by my side constantly for the past thirty-some-odd weeks the way Lynette had.

Leah, Aiden, and a host of other school friends milled about, too, chatting in happy clusters, their smiles echoing the joy of the occasion. I watched Aiden play badminton with some of his friends, taking Leah's aggressive sideline-coaching in stride. Bryce was throwing a football with one of

his brother's kids, running around in the yard and shooting me winks whenever he got the chance. Dane and Xander both sat near me, less extroverted than our other half—er, quarter?—but still enjoying the party for my sake. They'd do just about anything for my sake, I'd learned. Mine, and our baby girl's.

The little acrobat was kicking me from the inside a lot today, but I was too happy to mind. All of us savored the warmth of a summer that was just beginning, the promise of the future lingering in every breeze.

Even the drama that had brought us to this point couldn't touch this moment. "Heard Owen got rejected from Yale. Karma's a real thing," Leah had told me earlier, chuckling, her eyes sparkling mischievously. I let her laugh even as total indifference was all that I could muster up in response. Owen Prescott, the shadow of our past, didn't matter anymore. He had been left behind, a distant figure cluttering the rearview mirror, but the windshield showed only the bright open road ahead.

And our car was pretty full as it was, with the four of us and a car seat Dane had picked after extensive, surprisingly-nerdy research determined which was the safest. Luckily, Xander was always happy to foot the bill.

When we all gathered for a couple of cheesy speeches from our loved ones, I shared a private look with my guys, squeezing each of their hands in turn. Life was unfolding beautifully, and we were ready to embrace it. None of the petty troubles from our high school days could tarnish this moment.

Ouch. Some pretty legit abdominal pain sure could, though. I had to shuffle in my seat to re-situate myself after the sudden hurt passed, and each of my amazing baby daddies checked on me with the appropriate level of concern.

"All good," I told them once the strange pain had subsided. I brushed it off as a reaction to all of the excitement, but when a second wave of discomfort made me pause a few minutes later, something like panic started to crop up.

It was full panic mode when wetness spilled down my legs under my flowy sundress. That tight, sharp pain that seemed to

render me speechless... there was only one thing it could be. I knew it was time.

I turned to the guys, my eyes widening. “Oh, my God. I—I think it’s go time, fellas.”

I gripped my enormous belly as another pain wracked through me.

Dane, Bryce, and Xander all stared at me for a beat. Xander was the first one to finally notice how I was holding my dress awkwardly, since it was sopping wet. Those blue eyes had never been so bulging before.

“Oh, fuck!” he exclaimed, uncharacteristically animated. “It’s too early! You’re not due for another few weeks!”

“I know that,” I ground out through the pain.

“Sounds like our little girl doesn’t care about convenience or plans.” Dane laughed, clearly elated with this development despite his fidgeting, his one tell that he was scared shitless.

“Yeah, sounds like somebody else I know,” Bryce teased me, throwing an arm over my shoulders. A sharp wave of pain made me cry out, and then jokes stopped. Together in panic and in presence, all three of my guys helped guide me to the car, Leah rushing ahead to clear a path through the festivities.

The drive to the hospital was a blur, and at the hospital, the chaos continued. No matter how ready we’d seemed to be, how many plans and contingency plans and contingency-for-the-contingency plans Xander had strong-armed all of us into making, nothing could have prepared us for the bizarre energy of the delivery room. My doctor and a handful of nurses guided us through the whirlwind with perfect calm. The guys, clad in hospital gowns that clashed terribly with their attempts at composure, stood by my side through every single second, just like I’d known they would.

As the contractions intensified, Xander tried to recall Lamaze breathing techniques from a YouTube video, Dane fumbled with the ice chips, and Bryce somehow managed to get tangled in the fetal heart monitor wires. In the midst of the

pandemonium, the doctor calmly announced, “It’s time to push.”

With some more time, a final burst of determination, and a lot of screams from *all* of her parents, our little girl made her grand entrance into the world. Tears streamed down my face as they placed her tiny, squirming form in my arms.

“God, she’s so small,” I sob-laughed through her wails, looking with pure love into the wrinkled red face of my daughter. Her head was covered in a thin layer of blonde hair, just like mine, and her every tiny movement was a miracle.

A hush settled over the room as the guys marveled at the miracle before them, passing her between themselves after sufficient snuggle time. Bryce’s eyes widened in awe, Xander’s usually stoic demeanor melted away, and Dane, ever the intense one, seemed to cradle our daughter with the gentlest touch.

“She’s perfect,” Xander whispered.

“Amazing,” Dane agreed.

A teary Bryce said, “Do you think she looks like me?”

Even now, in the biggest moment of all of our lives so far, we could all laugh. That was part of what I loved about our little family.

In the quiet moments that followed, we discussed the future. Xander revealed that now that he’d graduated high school, his trust fund had kicked in, and he insisted on providing for us all.

“We’ll get a house in Boston,” he proclaimed to the room as he carefully cradled our daughter’s head. “Something big enough for all five of us, and close to campus.”

He’d gotten into Harvard, of course. With all of the raging hormones still struggling to settle in my system, just thinking about that made me teary. “I’m so proud of you, Xander,” I whispered to him. “And she’ll be proud of you, too.”

Bryce had committed to play football with a full scholarship at a school that was close enough to Harvard for us

all to stay together. Dane had plans to stay home with the baby while he worked toward making his writing dream a reality, though he insisted that he'd contribute to the household by working on cars from time to time. My own career path remained uncertain, though I already had plans to get some of my college gen-ed requirements out of the way when our baby was a little older. I still wanted to do something with horses, and though I hadn't figured out the perfect career to pursue yet, I had time. With the guys at my side, I also had the freedom to explore my passions while savoring these first moments of motherhood. I had no doubt that with my family and my little girl, eventually, I'd find the right path.

"What's her name?" Dane asked me, furrowing his brow as he thought. "Did we ever make a decision?"

"I'm still gunning for Bryce Junior, personally. Don't give me that look, babe! It totally works for a girl."

"You don't hear us advocating for Danielle or Alexandra," Xander snarked back, but he was smiling.

The weight of our daughter's warmth grounded me in the present, even as my heartbeat fluttered with nervousness. "I had an idea, actually," I said to the room, stroking the baby's head with a soft finger. The guys surrounded my hospital bed, eagerly awaiting my next words. "I was thinking... Ruby? You know, kind of like Jade, but a different stone. I think it's pretty."

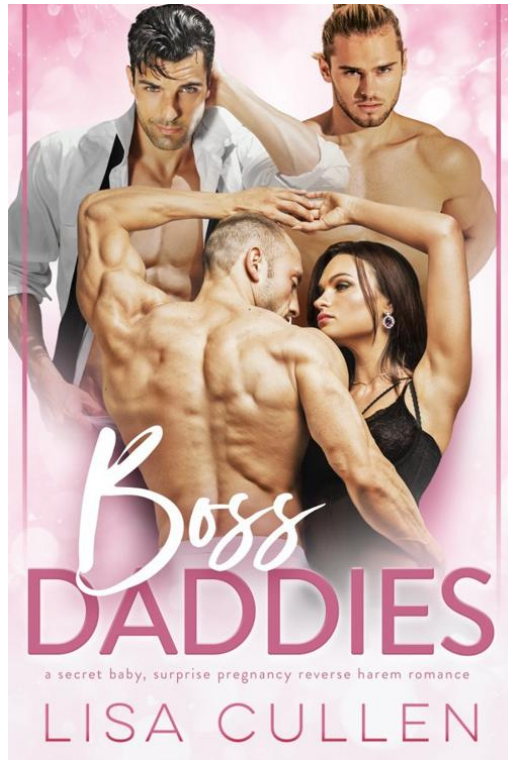
I knew when Dane started crying that I'd picked a winner.

Our story, an unconventional tale of love for a nontraditional family, would continue to unfold as we raised baby Ruby in love and friendship. All five of us would stick together through every twist and turn. As we stepped into the golden glow of the future, I couldn't help but feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude for all of it. This was our happily ever after, my three men, my little girl, and the woman I'd become through it all.

Thank you for reading *Lie No More*. I hope you enjoyed Jade's story. [Get Boss Daddies, the next book in the series here.](#)

*Binge read the entire Forbidden Reverse Harem Collection
[here.](#)*

BOSS DADDIES (PREVIEW)



DESCRIPTION

It was meant to be a swimwear modeling job.... But now my three bosses have me on my knees asking for more.

One of them is my baby's daddy... and *he has no idea.*

What was I thinking, accepting a modeling job in a freaking bikini? I *used* to be a model, but my life is so different now...

I'm a single mom trying to make ends meet when they hire me.

There's **Harper**, the tall, tattooed, serious and gorgeous billionaire who wants to change the world.

Player **Desi** is the confident, handsome stylist on set, teasing me relentlessly and making me want more...

And there's also quiet **Silver**, the irresistible shy photographer for the shoot.

I may be wrong... but I think they all want *me*.

I know not to mix business with pleasure. My main worry is making enough to pay for my daughter, but my money worries are soon erased as the three fashionable billionaires shower me and my little girl with expensive gifts.

Temptations arise at every opportunity and I succumb to my irresistible bosses... but soon, the fire between us sparks hotter, and I end up with a baby in my belly...

And no idea whose it is.

LUNA

“I ’m sorry but I just don’t believe you.”

The words washed over me like the first burst of a cold shower on a hot summer’s day. It took all of my self-restraint to keep the smile on my face as the growing warmth from the cup in my hand teetered towards painful.

“I can assure you,” I replied as sweetly as I could manage, “I definitely used oat milk.”

“I was watching you,” the customer replied, “and I didn’t see you use that oat carton at *all*.” The lilt in her voice matched the sharp way she pointed a manicured blue-tipped finger at me. The tart disbelief in her tone was abundant and as we stared each other down, I knew I didn’t have a chance in hell of winning this argument. I could have made this drink right in front of her salmon-spectacle-clad eyes and it wouldn’t have been good enough. Judging by the purse of her lips and the blonde bob of her hair, I was pretty sure she was simply spoiling for an argument.

“Ma’am, as you can see, we’re really busy today and I’m having to make multiple drinks at the same time—”

“That’s not my problem!” She cut in with such glee that I had to fight the reflexive urge to toss the cup at her and storm away.

“I understand that, I’m just trying to explain that you’ve seen me making other drinks—”

“I don’t care,” she interrupted again. Her raised voice caused several seated patrons to glance up from their various drinks and meals to check out the commotion. Fuck. The muscles in my face were already aching from my forced smile and keeping that up with an audience was even harder.

“I *want* another coffee. Made correctly this time.” Her beady eyes narrowed behind her glasses, and for a few seconds, I entertained the rather abrupt intrusive thought of dragging her over the counter and giving her a close-up view of the difference between our milk cartons.

That fantasy would be my only retribution today.

“Right away, ma’am.”

I didn’t miss the victorious smirk that curved across her lips as I turned away, and the image burned into my mind as I discarded the oat latte—and it *was* oat, we may be busy but I made that drink correctly—and started on another. Unsatisfied groans about the extended wait rose up from the queue that had formed behind Mrs. Oat Milk during her little rant. The sound sent a wave of burning, embarrassed heat across the back of my neck and down my spine.

Spending every available hour working my fingers to the bone serving coffee and cake to Chicago’s business elite was not how I wanted to spend my days, but it was a job. A job I’d poured my heart and soul into for the past five years just to make ends meet. Yet, every time I came face-to-face with someone like Mrs. Oat Milk—someone who took pleasure in making the jobs of service workers that much more difficult for their own twisted pleasure—I contemplated my survival rate if I just quit and lived on instant noodles until the end of my days.

A sweet, selfish fantasy that didn’t take into account my adorable daughter, Hazel, and her hatred of noodles. The desire for something better burned hotter with each passing day.

Coffee remade, I turned back to the customer and offered her the drink with the same fake service smile fixed upon my

face. She sniffed and opened her sleek black purse. That thing likely cost more than my entire month's wages.

"You could learn a thing or two from this," she said stiffly. "If you'd done the job correctly the first time then we all wouldn't have had to stand around waiting for you to fix your mistake. It's coffee, how hard can it be?" A tinkling laugh followed her words, a sweet sound that was so detached from the smarminess of her words.

I cast a quick eye down the queue with as much apology as I could muster in my eyes, but there wasn't a sympathetic gaze to be found. Of course not, these people were all the same. Running around the world with their fancy jobs, fancy clothes, and not even five minutes to spare standing in a queue.

"You ought to be more careful," the woman continued and the embarrassed heat from earlier was slowly morphing into anger mixed with tension in my chest. "I'm doing you a favor, coming to drink here instead of at the office. Without people like us, dinky little coffee places like this would go out of business. And you think it's okay to try and poison me with *dairy*?"

She tossed a few coins onto the counter so hard that one bounced against the hard surface before it rolled off the edge and clattered somewhere on the floor.

"Well, I'm not picking that up." Her beady eyes narrowed at me once more and the building anger within my chest snapped. My smile vanished.

"Without people like *you*—"

"Luna!" A warm, cheery voice tinged with the slightest hint of a French accent cut right through the wick of my explosive response and a warm hand landed on my shoulder.

I turned to see Cerise, my best friend and suffering co-worker by my side. Before I could react, she had taken the coffee from my hand and set it on the counter.

"Here's your drink, have a lovely day!" she called cheerily as her hand hooked around my elbow and dragged me a few feet away from the service counter.

“Cerise...” I began and my chest clenched like the snap of a rubber band as the anger I almost released on that awful woman stalled with nowhere to go.

“Luna,” Cerise warned softly, “I know. Awful people with awful requests, but if you had yelled at her, there’s no way Dickie would still let you off early. I swear, your temper runs as hot as your hair!”

Just like that, a small laugh bubbled in my chest and broke through the tension of frustration. Cerise was, of course, referring to my flaming auburn hair. At the mention of Dickie, I sought out the clock on the wall and groaned.

“Shit...” Cerise was right. It had taken me days to sweet talk my boss, Dickie, into letting me off early today to coincide with my daughter getting an early release from pre-school. If I was late and my mother found out, I’d never hear the end of it.

“Take five minutes. I’ll handle this.” Cerise patted my elbow and swept past me before I could even respond. Her cheery voice filled the cafe as she began apologizing for the wait and rapidly taking orders from the disgruntled queue. I took my leave and darted through the gray double doors into the back of the cafe.

Cerise always had my back, ever since she’d stumbled upon me sobbing amongst the garbage cans not two weeks after I’d started working here. She’d been so kind as I’d poured my heart out about not knowing how I was going to afford diapers after Dickie had shot me down about an advance on my wages. The next day, I’d come into work and she had left a baby care package outside my locker with all the essentials. I’d never been more grateful for such a kind act, and from then on we were best friends.

I stumbled into the toilet, locked the door behind me, and sank down onto the chilled toilet seat with a groan. Already my heart was beginning to slow without the crowded bustle of the cafe. I took a few deep breaths and the tension that burned like static in my chest started to ease.

Fuck.

I had almost lost my cool and something like that could easily have cost me my job. Losing this would turn the blogging site I freelanced for into my sole income and that was definitely not enough to live on.

“Come on Luna,” I sighed, “keep it together.”

It was just a shitty customer. Another hour and I would be out of here. I dug around in my apron and pulled out my phone. If I had any chance of making it to the school on time, I would need to call an Uber, an expense I was loath to create but in the interest of getting to Hazel before school finished, it was essential. I flicked through to the Uber app, added my details and request, then tapped on my emails to wait for the booking confirmation. Upon opening my inbox, however, something new caught my eye.

New Leaf

A pulse of confusion shot through my gut as I opened the email.

Dear Miss Luna Quinn,

I hope this email reaches you well. Please forgive my forwardness but I am writing to you in regard to a modeling opportunity that I believe will be extremely lucrative for us both. I came across your account on Instagram and I was blown away by your pictures.

If you haven't heard of us, my name is Harper Saunders. I am the Lead Designer and co-owner of New Leaf. We are a luxury fashion brand that specializes in lingerie, swimwear, and more for those needing a little boost to their confidence after physical alterations. Each year we put together several calendars for charity. These calendars showcase each of the designs of that year. If you haven't seen us around in stores, I've included a few links in this email for you to take a look at.

I understand that this may seem rather presumptuous but I think your style and confidence would really enhance the New Leaf brand. If you are interested, I would like to offer you an interview at our downtown office to discuss this opportunity more.

The opportunity includes a three-week all-expenses paid trip to one of our beachside shooting locations as well as compensation for any disruption this may have to your regular life. Childcare is included and you will be paid a total of \$1,000,000 upon completion of the calendar.

I've included my details below and I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Harper Saunders

CEO, New Leaf

A million dollars?! This was a joke, right? I read the email several times, unable to comprehend what I was reading. Harper Saunders, *the* Harper Saunders had emailed me? The billionaire CEO of one of the most famous fashion brands in the entire *world* had emailed me? No. No way. This had to be fake.

Despite my doubts, I quickly checked the email and all the attached information against what was on the New Leaf company website and it matched. It was *real*?

I had been following New Leaf on all their socials ever since I stumbled upon one of their charity showcases not long after Hazel had been born. I was drawn to them immediately as they had been showcasing lingerie and underwear for mothers who no longer felt sexy after going through such a powerful change to their bodies. A few of their photographs had even become the inspiration for some of my own designs.

Before Hazel, amateur modeling was my passion but pregnancy had definitely hindered those plans. I had been working to rebuild that confidence on my Instagram. With a modest following, I couldn't complain, but the thought of those pictures catching the eye of Harper Saunders?

"No fucking way," I breathed out and returned to the email, reading it over again and again. The amount glared back out at me.

One million dollars.

An email like that direct from a billionaire CEO... there had to be a catch. Men as rich as him surely had assistants for this sort of thing, right?

However, no matter how many times I checked, the information remained the same and everything provided looked legit.

Was I dreaming? I had to be. This was too good to be true.

“Luna!” A sharp rap of knuckles against the bathroom door made me jump, dragging me back down to reality, and yet even as my boss’s dull tones drifted through the door, the email remained on my phone staring up at me.

“Luna! You’ve been pissing for ten minutes, get the fuck back to work!”

Suddenly, the prospect of going back out there to face my overly handsy boss and a cafe full of people much richer than me was exhausting and I glanced back down at the email. The temptation was rising.

“Luna!” My manager knocked rapidly on the door again.

“I’m coming!” I called back as sweetly as I could. I still needed him on my side in order to get out of here early. As I flushed the toilet, I shoved my phone back into my pocket but the email was crystal clear in my mind’s eye.

It was just an interview, right?

I opened the toilet door and came face-to-face with my boss and his stubbled jowls broke into a toothy smile when he caught my eye.

“About damn time, I don’t pay you women to fuss about in there.”

“Sorry, Dickie.” I gave him my sweetest smile and slipped past him, narrowly avoiding the usual pat on the ass he liked to give anything with a skirt.

It was just an interview... and the prospect of anything that wasn’t this place was *exciting* despite my disbelief.

If I said yes... what was the worst that could happen?

End of preview. [Get the entire story here.](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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