



SINFUL
BLADES

MARY JENNINGS

Sinful Blades
by Mary Jennings

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Chapter 1: Sarah's POV - Intro/1st Look

“Barkeep! Another round of shots!”

Stephanie has absolutely no shame and I love it. She, Andrea, Elizabeth, Shannon, and Carmen all dragged me out two hours ago after I called Stephanie sobbing.

I should have seen this coming. I should have noticed the signs but I was so wrapped up in Step 2 and away rotations that I completely missed it. All those times Justin said he was home studying late, he was fucking my mentor.

He insisted that he worked best studying alone, that Step 2 was too important to mess up. I kept trying to make appointments with Professor Holden when Justin said he was studying and now I know why she was never available.

Well, joke's on them. Justin bombed his Step 2, has no chance at away rotations next year and Professor Holden was fired for the affair. But not before I came home from three fucking months of missing him and found them naked. On my couch.

I really need to burn that couch.

Justin was a year behind me and I don't think he's coming back now. I called Stephanie as soon as they frantically dressed and shuffled out of my apartment. When she answered, I couldn't hold back. She and the rest of my friends showed up on my doorstep shortly after.

Now we're three rounds deep and Stephanie is calling for another. Andrea and Elizabeth are groaning. Shannon and Carmen cheer.

“Why not?”

I pluck one of the way too sweet shots off the tray as soon as Ryan brings it over. We all know him. We've been here for three years and we'll all be at UVM until next May.

I grab another shot.

“That’s right, babe. Drink it all away.”

Carmen doesn’t pull any punches either. She’s almost as bad as Stephanie. I make a face when I set the shot glass on the table.

“What the hell is in that, anyway?”

“Trust me,” Shannon downs a shot, “you don’t wanna know.”

They all laugh. Andrea and Elizabeth lean back in their chairs. They’ve always been lightweights.

“I’m getting us some waters,” Andrea gets up.

“Oh you are no fun at all,” Carmen says.

“You won’t be saying that tomorrow when you’re not able to sit through lecture,” Elizabeth crosses her arms across her chest.

“That’s where you’re wrong,” Carmen smirks, “I took a rescue remedy before coming out. After Steph told us what was going on, I knew where this night was headed. I prepared.” She downs another shot.

Elizabeth sighs, “well forgive me for not trusting your ‘remedies.’” She uses air quotes.

“Don’t knock my remedies, Liz.”

“You know I hate that. It’s Elizabeth.”

“Now, ladies. Let’s not forget what this night is all about.” I can tell they’re about to start one of their arguments.

“Right,” Shannon says, “we’re here for you Sarah. At least you’ll never have to see that asshole again.”

I lean back and take a water bottle from Andrea as she comes to the table again. We all drink in silence for a minute.

“So where are you applying, Sarah?” Stephanie switches the topic to something that’s already on my mind.

Fourth year med students at UVM have to do clinical core rotations, elective rotations, and get in our residency applications.

And I’m completely terrified.

“Uh oh. I know that look. This isn’t about him whose name we won’t mention is it?” Elizabeth sits up straight again.

“We’re fourth years,” I start. “We have clinical rotations, residency applications, recommendations, and Match Day in March.”

“And?” Stephanie drinks her water, “you had the highest Step 2 score in our class and you just completed away rotations at a prestigious program. What do you have to be afraid of, Sarah?”

“Apparently I don’t pay that much attention to detail because I didn’t notice Justin fucking my professor for an entire semester.”

“Wait,” Carmen weighs in, “this went on for an entire semester?”

“Yeah,” my voice seems so small.

“It’s not your fault that he took advantage of your dedication to your studies,” Stephanie is resolute. “And that professor got fired for a reason. She’s just as bad. You can’t blame yourself for this.”

“Maybe,” I down another shot with my eyes closed.

Stephanie looks around the table. Everyone seems pretty quiet now.

“Stephanie’s right,” Shannon says, “now everyone raise your shot.” She narrows her eyes at Andrea and Elizabeth, “you too.”

Everyone raises their tiny glasses and Shannon continues, “to Sarah!” They all follow her chant, “May her next match be her top choice residency and not some asshole guy.” She downs her shot and looks me in the eye, “you deserve it. No one here works harder than you. Forget guys. Concentrate on your career.”

She’s right. I know she’s right. Justin and Professor Holden are in my past. All that I should be focused on is the future.

“Incoming!” Carmen has her eye on a group of men approaching our table. This is not going to end well.

The men get to our table and one of them puts his hand on Andrea's chair while the others kind of surround our table. It's kind of weird but we know Ryan has an eye on us.

"What are you ladies up to tonight?" The man with his hand on Andrea's chair speaks first. Andrea doesn't turn to look at him so we have a great view of her trying not to burst out laughing.

"We're celebrating," Stephanie says.

"Oh yeah?" A different man standing next to Elizabeth's chair speaks next.

"Yeah," Stephanie continues, "Sarah here just got rid of the worst kind of asshole, a cheating boyfriend who pretended to love her."

Andrea can't help herself. She bursts out laughing and her laugh triggers Elizabeth and Shannon. The men at our table start to squirm. They're looking at each other.

"What about you guys?" Stephanie asks the man who'd talked to her first.

"We're hangin out. Hockey pre-season is on soon so we're pregaming here."

Stephanie scrunches up her face, "Hockey? None of us have any clue about sports. We're in med school. No time for it."

"Med school, huh? That means you're all really smart, right?"

All five of them burst out laughing at that. The men shuffle their feet around and the guy that's been talking waits for us to calm down before he tries to regain control of the conversation.

"Okay, don't know why that's so funny. Anyway, would you wanna come back to our place for a little after party?"

"I don't know," Stephanie shoots back, "you all have a lot of your epidermis showing. It's really making me uncomfortable."

We all laugh at that one. It's an old joke but most of the men in these bars have no clue. They're all checking their clothes and

zippers like their dicks might be hanging out.

Epidermis is skin. It's August and they're in tees and shorts with sandals. I don't see a single tattoo or piercing among them. Justin had a lot of tattoos.

No.

I'm not wasting another second thinking of him. I take another sip of water as the men pay their tab and make their way to the door. I think one of them looked up "epidermis" on his phone because they have their heads down and they'd stopped trying to take us home pretty fast.

The place is clearing out but we're not planning on going anywhere. I look around to see if we can expect any other surprises.

That's when I see him. This burly man hunched over the bar. He has a highball glass with some kind of amber liquid in front of him. The large ice cube in it looks to be sweating. How long has he been sitting there?

He's shaking his head and his shoulders are moving up and down. He has broad shoulders and a head of wavy brown hair that's moving with every head shake. I can't really tell but he appears to be laughing. I think he watched us shut down those men that just left.

It's just us and the man left at the bar with Ryan. Stephanie calls him over for another round of shots and he says this is our last one and he wants us to order some food. They're protesting, saying that bar food is full of trans fats, but I don't really care about that right now.

"Ryan," I beckon him with a crooked finger, "can you put in an order of mozzarella sticks, some potato skins, and a cup of chowder."

He's writing it all down and Carmen looks at me with her eyebrows almost lost in her hairline, "You planning to share that?"

"Yes," I smile, "all but the chowder. That's mine."

"Fair enough."

I drink my water and try to sneak a look at the man at the bar without the others noticing. I'm not that subtle. Stephanie catches on in a second.

"You sure you wanna stuff your face in front of that gorgeous palate cleanser you're eyeing over there?"

"What?" I barely understand what she's talking about. Palate cleanser?

"You know," she goes on, her voice a little lower, "the old saying. 'To get over a guy, you have to get under the next one.'"

Andrea and Elizabeth giggle behind their hands over their mouths. Shannon rolls her eyes. Carmen laughs openly.

"You think I should hook up with him?" I wasn't even thinking that far ahead but Stephanie already has my next move planned out.

"Yes," she nods, "absolutely. He's way hotter than Justin and I can pretty much guarantee he's not fucking any of our professors."

Andrea bowls over in a fresh bout of laughter. I look over at the man again, this time with a lot less subtlety. My secret's already out. He pretends not to notice and sips his drink.

"I don't think he's interested." I am. I think Stephanie is onto something with this whole palate cleanser thing.

"Then make him interested." Shannon nods at him and then waves her hand in a "go ahead" gesture. The others nod their heads around the table.

I guess it's time for a palate cleanser. If he finds me even remotely as interesting as I find him, that is. I don't have anything else to lose.

Chapter 2: Luke's POV - Intro/First Look

I don't remember the last time I nursed a drink for this long. When I got here a couple hours ago, I sat down in my usual spot, looked around for anyone I know, ordered my favorite whiskey, and then I stared into the glass.

I see now that the large ball of ice that Ryan had placed in the glass was barely the size of a golf ball. Uncle Robbie loved golf.

After what's happened today, I'm glad there's no one here I know. I got the call as I was leaving practice at the rink. My father in a stone cold voice telling me that his brother died. Uncle Robbie.

It hasn't sunken in for me completely. I don't know what to do. My father said not to tell anyone. I'm not sure if there's going to be a viewing or a funeral or what they're planning to do. He acted like it was another item on his to do list. For him, everything is business.

In this case, I guess it really is business. Back handed, secret deals, completely illegal business. Not the legitimate business from Calloway Outdoors, no that might have been easier to accept. We'd be allowed to tell people then.

This is the business our family was actually built on. The part that everyone knows but pretends they don't have a clue, including local police. It wasn't enough for my father to get into the legal marijuana trade when it came to Vermont. It's not enough that Calloway Outdoors is thriving.

He needed more. Always more. So he and Robbie started a business growing a weed surplus and smuggling it over hiking trails across the country to the states that don't have legal marijuana use.

On a particularly long hike, Uncle Robbie didn't secure himself well enough when he went up into a tree to sleep. He

was in a spot where this is necessary at night to protect from certain predators. He fell and broke his neck.

And now my father is making arrangements for a cover story. Uncle Robbie wasn't supposed to be asleep in that area. It's not a legal camping site. One of the other hikers in his group found him when he didn't show up for a hand over.

I think he said Uncle Robbie had been there for a couple of days. Maybe that'll make the cover story easier. I take a long sip of my drink. I don't really care about the cover story.

"Have you eaten yet today?"

Ryan is standing in front of me. I guess my sulking has been discovered.

"Not really, no. I had a couple beef sticks before practice and a protein shake at breakfast."

I notice my stomach rumbling as I say it. Ryan notices too. He raises an eyebrow at me,

"How 'bout a Sammy?"

"Yeah, sure. Thanks for lookin out, Ryan."

"No problem Luke. Ya gonna keep nursing that or you want something else?"

"I'll take whatever local you have on tap tonight."

"You got it."

Ryan smiles and taps the bar as he walks away. I return a small smile back at him but it's like my face isn't into it. I take a long sip of my whiskey, trying to move forward from the Uncle Robbie thing. I can't do it. I can't stop thinking about it.

I should have come forward with that video when I had the chance. Now the evidence is way out of date and I have nothing else. I was scared of hurting Mom then and Uncle Robbie. He has a seven year old daughter.

Had a seven year old daughter.

My cousin is too young to understand how her father's actions and the actions of her grandparents might affect her. I don't

want to hurt her either but what other choice do I have at this point?

I'll have to get new evidence. The Calloways have a lot of friends in the DA's office and with the local police. I need something ironclad and I'll have to get it without any help. I'm not sure who I can trust with this.

Then there are Clint, Will, and Axel to think about. My teammates who have enjoyed the lucrative side jobs that my father keeps throwing their way. The Elite Hockey League officials would make sure they never set foot on the ice if they found out about this.

Honestly, I might be able to use that to my advantage. If I can't trust them, it's possible I can still use them. They're star players and if we get a championship trophy this year, they're getting a huge pay bump.

We're only in the pre-season right now and we're coming off a big loss at the end of last season. The guys are all down on themselves. I expected this but I'm still pretty disappointed with how practice went this morning.

The place has filled up since I've been lost in my plans. A group of women at one of the big tables is getting loud. They're keeping Ryan pretty busy. I notice that he hasn't brought over my meal yet. I don't mind. He'll get to it.

I let myself get distracted by these women. They're laughing and knocking back shots like it's their job. It's not hard to peg them as med students. Those people know how to drink.

The med students come here a lot because the bar is a pretty close distance between the UVW campus and the hospital. A lot of them eat dinner here and come to drink when they're not spending all night studying. Sometimes both. It's not uncommon to see books on the table next to beers.

One of the women seems to be the center of attention. Is it her birthday? Maybe it's a bachelorette party? No she'd have on one of those sashes or those flashy light crown things. Will's wife went all out the weekend before their wedding. She had all that stuff.

This looks more like some kind of achievement. Some of the wannabe hockey bros go up to their table and they're completely shut down. After that epidermis joke, I know they're med students.

The woman isn't the leader of their group. That has to be the redhead with the freckles. I think her hair adds about four inches to her height. She's the one who keeps asking Ryan for more shots.

No, the one who's caught my eye has smooth dark hair and a nice tan. She's not ridiculously skinny but she's not bigger than me either. She orders a bunch of food after those guys leave. At least she seems to have a decent appetite. And she likes chowder.

I suddenly see myself thinking of a future with this woman. Not just the future where I wanna fuck her but more than that. Uncle Robbie's death makes me think about our talks on the back patio with a few beers, passing a joint back and forth.

I've always wanted a family of my own. I'm only 27 but most EHL players retire by the time they're 30. What am I gonna do with my life after that?

Shit. She's coming over here. I really hope she doesn't know who I am. Was her family local before med school? Have I seen her around before? I can't remember but I don't think so.

I put down my drink as it becomes clear that she is coming over to me. It's like she sees a direct path right to me. I can't for the life of me imagine why. I must look like a brooding fuck sitting here nursing a drink for two hours.

I smile as she approaches. I haven't dated much recently but I do know that smiling is generally appreciated.

"Hey I'm Sarah. Can I sit here?"

She doesn't waste any time.

"Go right ahead," I wave at the seat, "I'm Luke."

"Hi Luke. I see you found our little joke funny. I suppose you know what "epidermis" means then?"

"Yeah, it's the skin. Aren't your friends gonna miss you?"

She turns her head to look at them behind her, “Nah,” she waves off the question, “they wanted me to come over here.”

”Really? Why?”

“Apparently,” she looks down at her hands, “I was staring.”

I start laughing, deeply. It rumbles out of my belly as I see her face start to turn red.

“Glad you find that so funny.”

I calm myself, “I’m sorry. People don’t usually admit that when they’re doing it.”

”Oh,” she shrugs her shoulders, “well no harm in it.”

Ryan shows up then with her chowder. She looks behind her again and waves at her friends as he brings two other plates over to their table.

“I told them I’d share the apps as long as I get my chowder to myself.”

“I see,” I nod my head, “so do you go to UVM?”

“Yeah,” she opens a packet of oyster crackers and shakes them over her chowder, “I’m a fourth year med student.”

”You’re almost done then?”

She takes a moment to enjoy her first spoonful of soup,

“That’s right. I can’t wait for March 15th.”

”Match day?”

”How do you know about that? Are you a med student too?”

I laugh at that, “No, I never made the grades for me school. This bar attracts a ton of med students since it’s between the campus and the hospital. I hear a lot of them talking.”

“I honestly never noticed that. Makes sense.”

Ryan drops off my sandwich and the beer. She orders another bottle of water. We both eat in silence for a couple minutes.

She looks back up at me, “If you’re not a med student, then what are you doing at this specific bar nursing that drink and brooding over here.”

“Brooding, huh?” I nod and think on that a second, “Okay, well this bar isn’t only for med students, Sarah. It’s not far from my place and I’m friends with Ryan. He always has good local beer.”

“You’re right. It’s not just a bar for med students. Ryan does always have good local beer. I don’t come here that much because I’m always studying.”

”Do you have a specific specialty you want to go into?” I take a sip of my beer and realize that it’s more than half gone. How long have we been sitting here talking?

”I’ve been pretty set on going into sports medicine. I really want to help professional athletes. It’s like one of the top tiers in sports medicine. I’m thinking I’ll work for a football team.”

”Football?” I can’t help but smile at that, “Do you know much about sports?”

”Not a stitch about any of them.” She smiles back at me, “I’ll learn, though.” She looks behind her and sees that her friends are getting up to leave.

“It looks like we’re headed out. It was nice to meet you, Luke. Maybe I’ll see you around.”

I can’t let it end like this. We barely got to have a whole conversation. I stand up when she does but she’s facing away from me, waving at her friends,

“Wait,” she turns back to me, “let me take you to dinner.”

I didn’t want it to sound like a question. She stands there for a minute, brows scrunched together.

“Ya know what, sure. Yes. I’ll go to dinner with you.”

”Great!” I pull out my phone, “Put your number in and we can talk tomorrow about where and when.”

I pull up a new contact and hand her the phone. She takes it and types in her information. I’m glad this night ended up turning around.

She hands me back the phone and I save her contact. When I look up, she’s still standing there.

“One thing, Luke,” her voice has gone down an octave and she sounds like she means business, “this has to stay casual. Full disclosure, I just got out of a relationship and it was a messy breakup. I have a lot going on with school this year and I can’t risk messing any of it up.”

I try to roll with this but I’m surprised, “Okay. We can keep it casual. Dinner and a good conversation. That’s all.”

“It better be,” she smiles and I see she’s being playful, “we’ll talk tomorrow?”

”Yeah,” I say, “tomorrow.”

She turns to go and I watch her walk away, hoping that I get to see that ass one day without her leggings covering it.

Fuck, I’m in trouble.

Chapter 3: Sarah's POV, First Date

I can't believe I agreed to a date. I 100% blame Stephanie and all her shots for this. I didn't expect to be going out with anyone after Justin and Professor Holden's betrayal. I should be concentrating on clinical rotations and my internship applications. Not some new hot guy.

He IS really hot. I know there's something interesting about him but I can't put my finger on what that is, exactly. When I think back to our conversation, I realize he didn't reveal much about himself. He didn't steer the conversation away from my life and my interests. That's either the mark of a gentleman or a complete psychopath.

Which one is Luke?

Either way, I'm attracted to him. Maybe something about Justin stepping out on me makes me go for his exact opposite. Justin was medium height and pretty skinny. Luke is tall, broad, and there's something dark about him. His skin is golden whereas Justin's was pale. I only remember seeing him smile once but I swear I saw his eyes twinkle.

Justin never twinkled.

Why am I comparing them? Ugh, I hate that I still feel anything but disgust for Justin. We were together since our senior year at Hopkins and then we ended up at the same med school here in Vermont. We supported each other through Step 2 studies and the stress of Step 1 exams.

Then again, now I know that for pretty much all of our last semester, he was fucking my mentor while I had his favorite snacks delivered to him when he said he wanted to study alone. Oh god. Did they eat those snacks together? I bet they did. The thought makes my stomach start turning.

I'm in my closet and I have to sit down for a second. I can't let this shit that I had no control over affect what I do today. Justin stopped calling me after about a week and I've been

texting with Luke the whole time. He talks about going to practice and going to work but he doesn't specify where he works or what he's practicing. I haven't even asked him his last name yet and now I feel like it's something I haven't ask about in person.

Back to that, to the date I'm meeting him up with him for in an hour. He suggested hiking and why I agreed to walk around in the woods with a stranger is beyond me. I told Steph what was going on and she said she didn't think Luke was anyone to worry about. We set it up with an app so that she can see my location and I can hit a button for help if it's needed.

All that being said, now I need a super cute outfit that's also not gonna make me sweat and will be comfortable for walking and climbing for several miles. I've hiked around some of the trails here before. I love to go out into nature and just walk. It takes me away from the closed up labs and lecture halls and helps me keep my head clear.

Luke didn't know this about me when he came up with this idea for a date. We thought about going for coffee or to dinner at a restaurant but we both agreed that was too generic and boring. We wanted to do something fun that helped us get to know each other. On a hike we can talk about ourselves or the trails. We may have to solve problems together and we'd be seeing a lot about how we fit together.

I don't have time to waste on a bunch of menial dates before deciding if I want this to go anywhere. I'm not really expecting that it will. Even if I'm talking about a casual physical fling, I still want to get to know him better and I don't want to do that in a coffee shop or a crowded restaurant.

So what the fuck do I wear? I'd usually go with a cute dress and some heels but obviously I can't wear that on a hiking date. I take a look at my walking shoes and notice how little I've used them since I got them. It's way too hot for my hiking boots. Will Luke think I was lying about loving nature hikes if he sees how untouched my shoes are.

Wait, since when do men notice anything about shoes? I grab those, a pair of cotton socks, my cropped merino wool

leggings, merino base layer tank, and a flowy looking tee to wear over it. I have a merino sports bra too and it matches my favorite cotton underwear, not that he's gonna see either of those on a first date anyway.

A lot of people don't know this but true merino wool is temperature regulating and sweat wicking. It's the best chance I have to not end up sweating all over Luke on this date. A French braid, some tinted sunscreen, water resistant eyeliner and mascara, some shimmery light eye shadow, and a high gloss lip shimmer completes the look. I can take the shimmer and the tinted sunscreen with me in case I need to freshen the look and it won't be too much.

On the drive over to the trailhead, my nerves start to take over. Why am I doing this? Either we end up in a relationship or as some fling and I don't know if I want either of those outcomes. I guess it'll most likely be a nice hike. With a hot guy and a good meal. He promised a picnic and I left that part to him. I'm nervous about that too. What man knows how to put together a good picnic?

I'd packed a backpack with a few small snacks, an extra t shirt and bra just in case (it's hot and I can't control all the sweat no matter how hard I try), my cosmetic bag, a wallet, and two extra water bottles. I have my water sling with the phone pocket to wear outside my backpack. Thankfully, I'm a little early and I have a couple of minutes to put everything together before Luke arrives. I don't want to be adjusting straps and making sure I look how I want with him standing there.

I'm leaning on my car drinking water when he arrives. He gets out of his car with a smile and a wave, then goes over to the passenger side to lean in and get some things. I can't help but notice his ass as he's literally bent over in front of me. He has a nice ass. I also notice he's wearing tight shorts. I thought only athletes wore those. He did say he went to practice.

I notice his backpack with the soft cooler attached to the bottom. It's high end. He has one of those popular large water bottles with the handle and a strap. Those are expensive. He's wearing a tight fitting shirt that looks like it's merino wool. I

know from experience how expensive this stuff runs. Who is this guy?

He waves me over to the trailhead, says “hello” and tells me I look great, then we head out onto the trail. Whoever he is, I’m about to find out.

“How did you get into hiking?”

I start off the conversation once we’re headed a good ways down the trail.

“My father and I have gone hiking since I was a kid. Sometimes with my uncles, cousins, brothers, and my sister too. We get big groups going whenever we’re all in town.”

“Your family doesn’t all live here?”

I’m glad he’s opening up. Something about that night at the bar had him closed off.

“No, they live all around the country but everyone is involved in the family business so that kind of comes with being interested in the outdoors in itself.”

What business makes a family of people interested in outdoor activities? That’s a new one.

He continues, “What about you? You’re not a townie, right?”

I laugh at that, “No. I came here for UVM. I went to Hopkins for my pre-med and undergrad studies. My family is from Maryland.”

He raises his eyebrows at me, “Maryland? No one’s from Maryland.”

“Funny,” I skip ahead of him a bit, “maybe I should show you how we do it in the Free State!”

I start running, dodging tree roots and expertly navigating the terrain. But Luke knows these trails better than me. He comes up in front of me out of nowhere and I gasp and jump back.

“Okay! You win! Wow,” I take a sip of water, “you sure know how to keep a girl on her toes.”

“Well I am a townie,” he stands next to me and sips his own water, “I know these trails better than everyone around here.”

“So is that what you do? Go hiking and drink whiskey? I thought you told me you had a stressful job.”

He pauses to swallow his water, “I do. And no, I don’t only hike but I’m out here a lot to test new equipment before we sell it.”

“We?” His face goes pale and I realize he didn’t mean to tell me that.

“Yeah,” he sips again, “um I’m not ready to talk about that with you yet.”

“Okay,” I can respect boundaries, “I understand.”

“You do?”

“I mean, I’m the first in my family to go to college. My parents are big in the arts scene, Mom owns a gallery and I have two sisters in college now for MFAs. They’re younger than me though.”

“And your Dad?”

I shuffle my feet a little. This is a tough one.

“I lost him five years ago. He didn’t even get to see me graduate from Hopkins.”

He looks off into the woods for a minute. I start to worry that I’ve said too much.

“How did it happen,” he asks.

“Heart attack.”

“Oh, so it was sudden?”

“Yes. It’s part of the reason I wanted to go into medicine. I was already pre-med when it happened but I wasn’t sure if I’d go to med school. When he died, it was almost like I felt a calling.”

“I can understand that,” Luke nods as he speaks, then sips his water again.

“You can?”

“I’m in a high stress job too but I knew the first day I started that it was what I was meant to do.”

“Testing hiking equipment?”

“Oh that’s not my main job. I’m an athlete.”

“Really?”

This explains the high end gear and the way he was able to run ahead of me so fast. It also explains the abs I can see right through that tight fitting . I bite my lip.

“Something wrong?”

I snap out of it, “Um so you’re an athlete. What kind of sport to you play?”

He looks at me head on, “You seriously don’t know? You’ve never heard of me?”

“Should I have?”

“Most people around here do.”

“What are you a local celebrity or something? Are you a famous football player?”

“Not football. I play for the Clovers.”

I have to think for a minute. Clovers? “Oh! Ice hockey, right?”

“Yes. I’m a starting center.”

“Is that like a big deal?”

He laughs, “I’ve never met anyone who didn’t know who I was just by looking at me.”

“So not just a local celebrity?”

“We don’t have to talk about this.”

Another boundary slams up in front of me. It’s like I can hear his walls coming up to lock me out. If he’s actually this famous, does he really think I’ll never find out? We hike further, pointing out foliage and animals we see on the way. He really does have a lot of knowledge about the area. I’m seeing parts of these trails I haven’t noticed before.

Then we get to the waterfall. I had no idea this was here. I've never seen it. He stops at the riverbank where the waterfall empties into and he looks up at it,

“That’s where we’ll have lunch.”

I follow his gaze, “Up there? By the pounding water? Won’t our food get wet?”

“You’d think so but there’s this sort of cave over but the ledge behind the waterfall. The walls shield the sound but the view through the water is amazing.”

“You want us to eat lunch in a cave?”

“Trust me it’s not just a cave.”

I’m still skeptical, “Is this one of those things you learned about with your father?”

“Actually, my brothers. My older brother used to take dates here in high school.”

We’re facing each other now and I lay a light smack on his chest,

“You brought me to a recycled date spot, really?”

“Recycled?” He laughs and looks down at my hand on his chest, “more like well researched.”

“Okay,” I step forward, “I can appreciate research.”

I look up at him and smile. I can’t help it when I see his own smiling face. His hand comes around my waist and my smile fades to something more serious. I know something is about to happen. I feel it.

His lips come down onto mine and I don’t pull away. They’re dry and soft at the same time, opening to deepen the kiss as he pulls me in closer.

I let him and I step in when he pulls. Our middles touch and his hand travels up my back to the back of my head. When he stops the kiss, I feel almost disappointed. I take a deep breath in and open my eyes, leaning forward to continue.

That's when I lose my footing on the riverbank and the next thing I know I'm being pulled with the current before I can start swimming.

Chapter 4: Luke's POV - Revelation of Identity

She just fell in. She fucking fell into the river and the current is taking her away. We have this great date going, I kiss her, and she falls into the fucking river.

I take action without thinking and jump in after her. I know these currents and where she's going. The river out past the falls calms down in about a quarter mile so it won't be far before I get to her.

Can she swim? She didn't say she could swim. But we didn't talk about that either. Why can't I see her down the river?

I call out to her, "Saraaaah!"

"What?"

She's right in front of me, about ten feet down the river holding onto a tree branch.

I feel my stomach drop as I swim over to her,

"Are you okay? I couldn't see you."

"Luke?"

I tread water while she pulls up on the branch in a feat of core strength that's incredibly hot.

"Yes, Sarah?"

"I'm not some damsel in distress. I told you I'm an experienced hiker."

She swings over to the bank and grabs a tree branch from the ground,

"Now, do you need help getting up here mister big shot hockey player?"

I grab the branch and am surprised at how well she braces herself. I use it as an anchor to walk up the bank. It's pretty steep over here. I look at both of us and see we're soaking wet.

Her shirt is clinging to her body and her feet are squishing in her shoes. I'm no better. Even merino wool has its limits when you end up jumping into a river.

I squeeze my shirt out and propose an idea,

"My family has a cabin about a half a mile down the trail over there," I point down the river, "Do you want to take the food there, dry off, and have our lunch?"

She tilts her head and is silent for a moment,

"That sounds like a great idea. I do have an extra shirt in my backpack."

"Just a shirt?"

She waves me off, "Don't start, Luke. I'm already embarrassed enough after my klutzy ass fell in the damn river."

I'm a little surprised at her language. She's been so poised up to this point. It makes me want to know more about her every facet.

"Let's get the packs and we'll head over. It should only take us about 15 minutes to get up there."

"Sounds good to me."

We walk in comfortable quiet after we grab the packs from the bank by the fall and then double back to head to the cabin. She walks a few steps behind me and seems to watch the river as we go.

After about five minutes, she catches up to walk by my side and turns to me.

"You said your father and brothers came out with you a lot here. Did you stay at this cabin a lot?"

"We used to but my siblings and my uncles moved away."

"Oh," she looks down, "that must be difficult for you."

"It is, especially recently."

She scrunches up her eyebrows, "What happened recently?"

I make a quick decision but she already knows about me being a hockey player. Might as well spill the whole kit and caboodle. She's either gonna be happy I opened up or horrified at my last name but either way at least I'll know where I stand.

"That night you met me at the bar, I was in a really bad way."

"I kinda noticed but we'd just met. I didn't think it was my place to say anything."

I sigh, "I get that. Well, what happened was I'd just found out that my Uncle Robbie died. We were very close. He's one of the ones that still lives an easily drivable distance away. Now I'm not sure there's even going to be a funeral."

"Wait, why wouldn't there be a funeral? Are they doing a wake or a memorial or something instead?"

"No, they're keeping everything quiet."

"I don't understand. Won't the rest of your family want to say goodbye?"

"I'm sure they will but my father isn't going to allow this to become news of any kind."

She huffs out a breath,

"And who is he that makes him so high and mighty that he gets to decide that for everyone else?"

I stop walking. We're almost at the long driveway for the cabin,

"He's Edward Calloway."

She stops with me, "You're joking. So the outdoor equipment you test is for Calloway Outdoor Enterprises?"

"Yep. Technically, I'm an executive. I get out of most of that boardroom crap by saying I'm working on development and quality control. If I pretend to care about that, my father usually backs off about everything else."

"And you're a professional hockey player on top of that. So you're..." She trails off.

"—Filthy rich, right." I finish her thought.

We keep walking and she sees the ornate “C” across the wrought iron gate. I type in a code and it opens. We walk through and she falls behind me a couple steps again. She’s looking around with her mouth agape at the grounds. Then her eyes widen as she sees the house.

“That’s a cabin?” She points at it.

“I dunno, we always called it ‘the cabin.’”

“Luke, that is not a cabin. This is bigger than any house I’ve ever lived in.”

“It’s only three bedrooms.”

I’m dismissive. I’m used to this every time someone sees any of our houses for the first time.

“Okay I kind of get why you didn’t want to go to some nice restaurant or somewhere else crowded on this date.”

“Oh?” I’m interested to see what she thinks.

“If we went to any of those places, you’d be swarmed. We’d never get in any good conversation and the whole date would’ve been overshadowed by your last name.”

She really does get it. She starts to run up the stairs to the front door.

“Come on,” she waves to me, “give me the grand tour!”

Inside, I show her into the kitchen where we put down our packs. The laundry room is right next to it and I have dry cleaning bags for the wool items.

They shouldn’t take long to dry, even on the low setting. I show her where everything is and then head to one of the guest rooms to get her some sweats. She said she has a shirt. As much as I want to see her walking around without pants, I don’t want to make her uncomfortable. It’s still our first date, after all.

When I get back, the laundry room door is closed. I knock and then turn the knob to hand her the sweats. I push the door a

little too far and see her taking off her shirt. She grabs the sweats and then pushes the door.

“No peeking!” She calls back.

I don’t see much but the glimpse I did catch intrigues me. I know she’s hot by looking at her and she wore leggings and a short dress when I met her at the bar. Seeing the whole package though? It’s so hard not to try to look after that.

I’d already changed into sweats myself. She opened the door when she was done and holds up her clothes,

“Do you have wool wash?”

“I do, actually. I love merino wool items for hiking.”

“Me too! I think you’re the first man I’ve ever seen wearing merino bike shorts.”

“Making fun of me now?”

“No, actually I’m admiring you. Especially if you have an entire empire of outdoor gear to choose from and you chose that.”

I’m floored, “Admiring me? For bike shorts?”

She turns a little red in the cheeks,

“For a smart choice. Now can you show me how this works?”

I open the door all the way and move into the room,

“Here, I have my own stuff to wash.”

She steps back farther into the small room and hands me her clothes. She watches as I put everything into a mesh bag, add the wool wash, and get the load started.

“So you’re a hockey player who knows how to do his own laundry?”

She leans against the wall, a sly smile on her face.

“You’ll find I’m not your typical jock.”

“I don’t have a laundry room at the senior apartments. They have these exclusive buildings for the third and fourth years and we have shared laundry. It’s coin operated.”

I laugh and turn toward her, “I don’t think I’ve ever used those.”

“I miss being able to go home and do laundry. I did that all the time when I went to Hopkins.”

“Must be tough being so far away,” I take a few steps closer.

“It is. I miss my mom and my sisters but there were a lot of places that reminded me of my Dad all the time. Made it harder to be there. That’s why I don’t go home that often now.”

As she speaks, I move closer to her. She’s talking about her family, going home, and I find myself wishing I had such wholesome reasons to avoid my own family. I take her hand as she talks about her Dad. I can tell it still hurts her to remember him.

“Being here reminds me a lot of my Uncle Robbie.”

She looks down at her hand now in mine, “Does that make it difficult? We don’t have to eat here if you don’t want to.”

“No, the opposite. I feel closer to him here. Kind of like I don’t mind not being able to say an official goodbye forever.”

I take one more step and my foot lands between where hers stand. Sarah looks up at me and this time there’s no trace of a smile on her face. She isn’t sad or angry.

I see an intensity in her eyes that draws me in and our lips are locked together again. She leans into the kiss and our mouths open, reposition, and we both breathe in as our tongues intertwine.

My hand is on the back of her head again. Her arm encircles my waist and pulls me closer to her. I can feel her wanting me and I want her back. My body pushes hers against the wall. I’m sure she can feel how hard I am against her. As our kiss grows more intense, her hand drops to my ass and she gives one cheek a squeeze.

I’m taken by surprise and the kiss ends abruptly. She scoots out from her spot against the wall and I watch her walk toward the door. She goes out into the kitchen and turns back to me,

“Let’s see about this picnic you brought. I’m starving.”

Chapter 5: Sarah's POV - romantic growth/intimate scene

I watch Luke take the items out of the picnic basket and set them on the table. I don't know how I feel about the moment that's just passed. The first kiss had me falling into a river. This one has me reeling. If I hadn't taken him by surprise with that ass squeeze, who knows where this might have gone.

Does he really have feelings for me? Or is he roused by the heat of the moment, us in that tiny laundry room with all the attraction between us. We both know it exists. I don't deny that. But does it also exist for him? I know the physical part must be there. I felt his dick get hard against me when we kissed. Is that all this is though?

I watch him set the table and notice that this isn't the typical picnic. He has silverware, cloth napkins, a couple of beers from a local spot in a cooler pouch in the bag, and the meal is a real meal. He's setting out a pasta salad, bread that looks and smells homemade, a little bowl of fresh cut fruit, and a block of some fancy looking cheese with a small cutting board and a cheese knife.

"This is beautiful, Luke."

"What did you expect?" He says with a sideways glance my way.

"Honestly? I figured you'd bring a couple sandwiches and some chips. This is a very pleasant surprise."

He sits down and starts filling up his plate, "You're not giving off a 'this is pleasant' kinda vibe, Sarah. What's going on?"

I sigh and look down at the fruit and bread already on my own plate. I push the fruit around while I avoid the question. When I look up, he's staring at me like he intends to stay frozen there until I answer his question.

“It’s just,” I don’t know how to word this without sounding weird, “I wasn’t expecting...you.”

He laughs and I look back down at my food.

“What do you mean, me?” He says between laughs.

“I mean, I thought you were some random barfly or a townie I could have a fling with before school starts back up. I just got out of a long relationship. I have clinical rotations coming up and applications for my internship. I can’t let anything distract me.”

He takes a moment to finish chewing and then swallow, “Oh, I’m a distraction now.”

“After that kiss?”

“I see what you mean.”

We both eat in silence for a few moments and then he speaks up again,

“Sarah, I didn’t expect this either. It’s more than a distraction for me. I’m finding that I have feelings for you. I have so much to deal with when it comes to my family and my team but with you, I don’t know, I feel different. Like...” He trails off.

“- like coming home,” I finish his thought, knowing that it’s the same as my own.

He breaks the next silence,

“Let’s take this out on the porch. Grab your beer. You’re gonna love the view.”

Out on the porch, I realize he’s right. The view here is amazing. I wonder who cultivated these grounds. Luke’s family does own an outdoor gear empire, anyone could have done this. Then again, he’s also filthy rich, apparently. They could have hired someone.

“Isn’t it beautiful?” Luke steps outside and sits on the porch swing next to me. “My mother designed it but my brothers and I kept it up over the years. When we got older, we hired a

groundskeeper but my mom still comes out here sometimes to change things around.”

I look around and see that the driveway we walked up when we got here is a lot longer than I imagined after walking up it on our arrival. This house is set so far back that the garden in front of me completely blocks off the view to the trails. It’s like we’re invisible in our own little paradise.

For now.

He turns to me and I mimic his movement. He continues,

“My mother has loved to garden for as long as I can remember and I think it’s part of why my father created Calloway Outdoor Enterprises. He says he was always destined to do something great, to create a legacy for the rest of us.”

“That’s not intimidating at all,” I laugh and bring my legs up onto the swing. I lay my feet across his lap and he puts his hands on my legs without a thought.

He laughs with me, “I don’t know, I guess I never thought of it that way because I grew up with him talking like this.”

“How did you get into playing professional hockey then?” I take a sip of my beer as his fingers move absently up and down my leg.

He pauses before answering, “Honestly, hockey was my rebellion. My father owned an outdoor gear business and I did the one sport that was inside and cold. I think he’d have rather me join a basketball team or a bowling league rather than ice hockey.”

“He’s not supportive of that part of your career then?” His hand is moving farther up my leg, close to my thigh.

“No, but he’s learned to accept it. My Uncle Robbie was very supportive. So is my mother.”

He pauses to sip his own beer. I sip mine and notice it’s more than half gone. I drank one with our lunch inside and now I’m getting a bit tipsy. I feel comfortable and relaxed with him but at the same time I’m still nervous because he’s essentially a stranger.

Luke continues, “There’s more to the family business.” He breathes in, hesitating. “Can I trust you with this?”

“Yes,” and I mean that. I don’t know why but I trust him too.

“The Calloways are involved in smuggling marijuana out of state.”

“You mean drug trafficking?”

I’m incredulous but I also still feel safe with Luke. He doesn’t seem to want this part of his family’s life. I decide then and there that he must not be involved. I don’t know him, I get that. Somehow, I still know he wouldn’t be involved with this.

“I wouldn’t put it that way but yeah,” he says, “I’m not involved. My father wanted me to be and that’s part of the reason why I filled my schedule with hockey. Another part of it is the celebrity of it all. My father can’t risk a public figure in the spotlight getting caught smuggling marijuana. He wouldn’t be able to cover that up like they’re covering up Uncle Robbie’s death.”

“That was a smart plan,” I take another sip, “so they use the hiking trails then?”

I think I have this figured out, for the most part. I’m good at putting pieces together quickly. It’s a necessary skill for medical studies.

“That’s right,” he scoots closer to me, his fingers still brushing across my leg and moving up to my thigh, “but I don’t really wanna talk more about that.”

“What do you want to talk about then?”

I sit up and lean forward. Luke’s hand brushes up my thigh and lands on my hip and he scoots me closer still.

“I don’t wanna talk anymore at all.”

He comes forward for the kiss and I lean into it all over again. We’re not in a tiny room this time or on a slippery river bank. My plan for this date had never been anything like this but nothing has gone according to plan here. Luke’s hand moves back to my thigh, fingers brushing that sensitive skin on the inside. They’re moving farther up.

I move my tongue further into his mouth, hungry for more of him. We're moving in closer to each other as the kissing intensifies, his fingers moving farther up the inside of my leg as we do. I breathe in deep when I feel him move aside my panties and thrust two fingers into my pussy. He makes me moan against his lips, his fingers moving deeper inside me, stroking me and making me wetter.

My hips move on his fingers, driving him further, and he starts to pump in and out, working my pussy and rubbing my clit as he comes out. His lips move down my neck, my collarbone, and the long neck opening of the oversized tee shirt I wear. I don't waste any time. The shirt is over my head in a second, my sports bra following. They both fall somewhere on the porch but I don't care.

The swing starts to move with the force of his fingers thrusting. He doesn't seem to notice as his mouth closes over one nipple and he sucks. My back arches and a much louder moan escapes my lips. For a brief second, I wonder if anyone can hear me on the trails. So what if they can? They can't see us and the property is locked by that huge heavy gate.

I'm pulled from that thought by Luke's lips moving down my stomach. The sweatpants are gone and as his lips move, he pulls my panties off too. I'm laying naked on a porch swing with a billionaire athlete about to make me come. Definitely not how I saw this date going.

He reaches my pussy lips with his mouth but his fingers don't stop moving. He pumps harder and uses his tongue to work my clit. My own hands are on my breasts, playing with my nipples while he uses his mouth down below. He switches his fingers for his tongue and I'm overcome with a feeling of impending release.

Luke's athletic talent certainly spreads to this muscle as well. His wet fingers move on my clit while his tongue moves in my pussy. He hits my g-spot with it and I can feel wetness flowing out of me. He's not stopping. I don't want him to stop. My moans have turned to cries as he relentlessly works my pussy.

I don't stop moving my fingers on my nipples and the extra sensation brings me to climax in the next moment. It goes on and on and Luke rides his tongue through it until he knows I'm done. When I see his head come up, his tongue is replaced by his fingers again, stroking slowly to bring me down. I can't describe the feeling I have right now.

He kisses my breasts and brings me out of my orgasm with one last long stroke. He kisses my mouth, lips still wet with my cum. I wrap my legs around him and deepen the kiss again. When we come up for air, I ask,

“Maybe we should take this inside.”

He smiles, face shining with that wetness,

“Sure. But I'm not done with you yet.”

I smile back, “I was hoping we were just getting started.”

Chapter 6: Luke's POV - Continued

Intimacy

Sexual healing is a real thing, I swear. This kiss was different. This time, we were both on the same level. When my fingers slid into her wet pussy, I knew exactly where I wanted this to end. Every moan made my dick harder. When I tasted her, I wanted to bathe in that wetness. When her back arched, I wanted to make her scream. When she came, I wanted to fuck her right there on the swing.

Still naked, she wraps her legs around me and suggests we bring it inside. More room to fuck her and less chance of splinters in our asses? I'm game. I stand up and walk us inside, her legs still wrapped around me and the intense kissing starting all over again. I know this cabin with my eyes closed. There's no need to worry about bumping into anything.

I get us through the door and go right to the living room with the fireplace. August in Vermont might be warm but the temperature tends to drop at night and I could see the clouds becoming overcast while we were outside. I plan to fuck Sarah well into the night. Lighting a fire will make being naked much more comfortable.

"Get comfortable," I tell her, "I just have to go grab something quick."

I know I left some condoms in the downstairs bathroom last time I was here. I head over there and am relieved to find them in the drawer where I thought they'd be. I take three from the box and get undressed. Might as well meet her as she is when I come back to the room.

She's on the couch under one of the throw blankets that had been over the back. I take the remote and hit the button to light the gas fireplace. It comes to life in an instant and I'm across the room in the next. I put the condoms down on the side table and catch a smile from Sarah. She grabs my hand and pulls me down to her, letting the blanket fall away.

I kiss her and stroke her pussy, happy to find that she's already wet again. I grab one of the condoms and ask her,

“Are you sure about this?”

She kisses me again, “Yes, Luke. I'm sure. Now are you going to fuck me or not?”

I open the condom and roll it on as she speaks. I don't want to wait another second to be inside her. She wraps her legs around me again as I guide my way in and thrust slow and deep. I watch her breasts bounce as I pull out and thrust again, keeping my pace slow at first.

I brace myself on the end of the couch behind her head and keep a steady pace. She pulls my head toward her, hand on the back of my neck, and kisses me slow and deep, the same way my dick drives into her pussy. Her back arches again and her breasts press against my chest. The contact drives my pace faster.

“I thought you wanted to fuck me,” she says between kisses.

“Oh you're gonna regret that.”

She lets out a light laugh, “I really doubt it.”

I close my mouth over hers again and pull all the way out. She groans and looks at me with eyes that almost seem sad.

“Turn over.” I use a firm voice, like I'm giving her an order, and she obeys without a word.

I take a moment to admire her taut but round ass before I take her hips in my hands, guide myself into her pussy once more, and start driving into her at a much faster pace. I move one hand up to a breast and lol her nipple between my thumb and forefinger.

I feel her getting wetter and she spreads her legs a little farther, opening herself to me more. At that nudging, I drive deeper, getting more intense with every thrust, keeping the faster rhythm. She's crying out in earnest now.

I see her gripping the couch harder, her knuckles going white. Her muscles are beginning to tighten around my dick but that doesn't slow me down. She's so wet that it's easy to keep my

pace. I use my knees to push her legs farther apart and I move my hand down her belly to rub her clit. She's about to come again, I feel it. And so am I.

This time, we reach the finish line together. I have to stop myself from cheering as I do. I stroke her clit a little slower and pull out, leaning back on my heels and helping her reposition herself so she's laying back on the couch. I pick up the blanket from the floor and hand it to her.

"I'll be right back," I look her in the eye, kiss her, and head back to the bathroom.

After disposing of the condom, I grab a couple of towels and then some water bottles and the bowl of fruit from the kitchen. When I get back, her eyes light up at the sight of the food and drink.

"I'm so thirsty," She reaches a hand out and I give her a water bottle, "That wasn't the workout I expected from this date, but it was definitely more enjoyable."

"What, you've never had an orgasm from a good hike?"

She downs half the water bottle, "You have?"

I sip my own water, "No," We both laugh.

I sit on the couch with her and offer the fruit bowl,

"Better gear up for round two."

She looks up from choosing which piece she wants, "Round two, eh?"

"You don't think that was it, did you?"

"Honestly?" She tilts her head to the side, "I don't know what to think about any of this."

Shit, did I do this wrong? "What do you mean?"

"I just got back from away rotations, do you know what that is?"

I don't have a clue, "Not a clue."

"It's when we do a sort of clinical rotation at a hospital different from the one we do med school clinical at for fourth

year. Not everyone gets these rotations but I did.”

“Okay,” I feel like she’s sort of veering away from the topic of not expecting me to fuck her.

“This is relevant, I promise,” she sips her water and continues, “I had this boyfriend and he didn’t have an away rotation because he’s a year behind me.”

“Had?” Oh please do not tell me she’s taken.

“Oh yeah he’s long gone,” she says, and my shoulders drop. She laughs, “I’m not the cheater in this story.”

“Oh shit, really? Who would be dumb enough to cheat on you?” I can’t imagine anyone giving up this woman on purpose.

“Not only was he dumb enough to cheat, but he cheated with my professor and mentor.”

I lean back against the couch and she stretches out her feet over my lap. I sip my water, eat some fruit, and think about what to say next.

“That’s some heavy stuff but then again I came at you with dead Uncle Robbie so I guess we both brought the drama.”

She adjusts the blanket on her and plays with the fringe, “Do you think that’s why this connection is so intense? I’m not imagining that, right?”

“No,” I take her hand, “you’re not imagining it. I’m just not sure what to do with it.”

She smiles, “I have an idea.”

She sits up, moves the bowl of fruit from my lap, and puts both our closed water bottles on the floor. I watch her, wondering what she plans to do next. She straddles me and reaches for one of the condoms on the end table. She holds it up to my eye level,

“Round two?”

I get hard again as she says it and I take the condom from her. She puts her hands on my dick and strokes, making me stop what I’m doing for a minute. She kisses me, then her lips are

on my neck as she strokes me slowly with a firm grip. Her hands move to my thighs and her lips go down my chest.

She uses her tongue to trail down my stomach and before I understand what her plan is, her mouth is over my dick. My hands go into her hair, tangling my fingers in her dark waves. I lean my head back against the couch and close my eyes. She sucks the head of my dick as one of her hands wraps around the shaft. Moving in tandem, she strokes and sucks faster and faster.

When she uses her tongue on the underside of my shaft, I almost come right there. I pull gently, hoping she'll understand my indication to stop. I want to come inside her. She looks up at me and I beckon her with a crooked finger. She stands from her kneeling position on the floor and straddles me again. We're kissing and she's stroking me while I open the condom and get it on as fast as I can.

I'm inside her again and this time I don't spend any energy on slow movements. I can't hold back anymore. I hold onto her, kiss her lips, her neck, her breasts as she meets me thrust for thrust. I can see her abs working and I feel the expert movements of her hips. I put my mouth over one nipple and suck, using my hand to cup and play with her other breast.

She braces herself on the back of the couch and works her hips to help me get deeper inside her. She moans and I suck harder on her nipple. I'm holding back now because I don't want it to end but she's not letting up. She slams into my dick and I can't keep my mouth on her anymore. I replace it with my hand and roll both her nipples. I feel her getting wetter with every touch, every thrust.

We slow down the pace and kiss while our hips move in tandem. Our thrusts are still deep and I know she wants to keep going as badly as I do. She deepens the kiss and picks up her pace again. I don't think I can hold back anymore and she knows it.

"Come for me Luke. I want you to come," she says against my lips.

We're kissing as I come a moment later, slowing down our thrusts to gentle strokes, then stopping. I'd brought towels back before so I didn't have to leave to get cleaned up. Sarah swings one leg over me and we're sitting next to each other. I lean forward to grab the water bottles and hand her one.

"That's definitely the way to do round two, Sarah."

She leans her head on my shoulder, "Not what you were expecting?"

"Nothing about you is expected. I wouldn't have it any other way."

Chapter 7: Sarah's POV - Intimacy Aftermath/Parting ways

We sit on the couch eating and talking naked for a few hours after round two was over. I find myself wanting him again, noticing that last condom on the side table. He tells me all about the family business and, while I'm shocked to learn that he comes from drug traffickers, I understand how hard it must have been for him to tell me that.

We move over to the fireplace as night falls completely. He gets a bunch of large cushions from another room. I remember that I told Stephanie I'd call her to make sure I'm okay. She wants to know why I'm not home yet and I just tell her that she'll find out all the details tomorrow. I tease her with the promise of drama but I know I have to ask Luke what's okay to tell her first.

He's fine with me revealing his true identity, as long as I keep the family secrets, which I assumed was a given anyway. I also plan to tell her about the mind blowing sex. Luke doesn't mind people hearing about that either. Then we get to the part where we talk about seeing each other again and I don't know what to say.

"Do you wanna go out again?" He seems so tentative, which I find strange after all we've shared.

"Luke, every part of my body is screaming 'yes' at that prospect. But my head is conflicted."

His face falls, "Conflicted? Why?"

"Because of everything we've talked about. Your celebrity, my career, and everything in between. I don't want anything to come between me and my dream match in March. If I get it, that means I'd be leaving."

"What's your dream match?"

"Mass Gen," I say without taking a beat.

"That's near Harvard, right?"

“Yes.”

“So why didn’t you go to Harvard Medical School?”

I grimace. This is a tough thing to admit, “Justin was coming here and I still had a full ride to UVM so I went with him.”

“I see.”

“I know, following a guy is stupid but UVM is still part of the original Ivies.”

Luke’s eyebrows go up, “I didn’t know that.”

“I think a lot of people don’t.”

“So if you don’t get matched at Mass Gen, where else might you end up?”

“Probably NYU, Columbia, or possibly UCLA.”

“Why would you pick those places?”

“They have top sports medicine programs.”

He smiles at that, “Sports medicine? Really?”

“I know, I know nothing about sports but I don’t really need to know that much. It’s more about the kinesiology of it.”

“Okay but you’ll have to learn something about the positions and what the players need to do so that you can treat them effectively.”

I lean back against the cushions, “True. I suppose you’re right.”

“And what about all that means we can’t see each other from time to time?”

The answer comes to me immediately, “You’re too distracting.”

At that, he practically roars with laughter. He leans back into his own cushions and sighs.

He turns to me, “I guess you’re probably right. I can’t have any distractions either.”

“No?”

“This might be my last year to win a championship.”

This confuses me, “What do you mean your last year. Aren’t you like not even 30 yet?”

“Most professional hockey players retire by the time they’re 30.”

“Retire?”

“From the game. I might still coach or be an announcer or something.”

He sits up straight again and looks into the fire, then looks at me,

“How about this,” he says, “We both have about five years of building our careers before we can afford the distraction of a relationship, right?”

I think for a minute, “That sounds about right.”

“Okay so in five years, we look each other up. If we’re both still single, we go out again and see what happens.”

I put out my hand, “Deal.”

He shakes my hand and then pulls me toward him for a kiss.

“I know a much better way to seal this deal.” He kisses me again, “the night isn’t over yet.”

He seems determined to make sure I remember him five years from now. And he does a damn good job imprinting himself on my mind.

“What, you had sex on the first date? You? Sarah Lancaster, future doctor and straight A student who plans every detail of her life? You had spontaneous sex with a man you barely knew?”

She is having way too much fun with this.

“Yes Stephanie,” even I can hear the annoyance in my voice, “do you want to hear about the rest of it or not?”

She sits down on my living room couch, “Go. Leave nothing out.”

Explaining the date with Luke seems like reciting erotica, only I lived it so it's weirder. Stephanie is on the edge of her seat the whole time. At the end of the story, she looks at me head on,

"After all that, you're not even going to see him again?"

"I might. In five years."

"Come on, Sarah, he's not going to call you in five years."

"Why not?"

"Because he's a big shot hockey player with a million dollar family fortune. He's probably going to end up marrying some heiress. Or a princess. Who knows, but he's not going to wait five years to contact a possible future doctor."

"You weren't there, Steph. You don't know what it was like."

"Sounds like a hot guy, some good beer, and great sex"

"It wasn't just that."

"Whatever," she waves her hand in the air like she's waving the topic, "we have to go meet the girls in the courtyard."

"First day of the fourth year recap."

It's a tradition I started back in year one. We get together and talk about the best and worst parts of our first days, exam days, and some other big milestones. Sometimes we just get together to bitch about assignments and bad professors too.

We get downstairs and Stephanie is recounting my story to Elizabeth, Andrea, and Carmen as soon as we sit in our lounge chairs around the fire pit. Carmen says she's been outside for a bit and she'd already started a fire. As Stephanie regales them with my story about Luke, Andrea passes out marshmallows and skewers. Elizabeth has the graham crackers and chocolate.

They all talk about whether or not Luke will call me in five years. Andrea and Elizabeth are with Stephanie. They think he won't even remember tonight. Carmen's with me.

"What's wrong with having a little hope for something as great as true love?"

Carmen squishes her marshmallow between graham crackers with chocolate laid on the bottom and takes a big bite.

“I’m rooting for you Sarah,” she says around a mouthful of s’more.

“That’s really ladylike, Carmen,” Elizabeth chides her.

Carmen turns to Elizabeth and smiles at her with teeth that still have chocolate and marshmallow all over them.

“Oh, gross!” Elizabeth turns her head. Everyone else laughs, including me.

We all roast our marshmallows and make s’mores while the others talk about their favorite subjects and professors from the day. I lean back and look up at the stars, Carmen’s words on my mind. I decide she’s right. True love is worth hoping for.

I guess I’ll see how well that works out in five years.

Chapter 8: Luke's POV - missing Sarah/reuniting

I told her everything and then we just went our separate ways. It's so strange for me to think about someone out there I barely know who's just walking around with my family secrets. Somehow I know I can trust her. Thinking about her still feels like going home.

At practice, I can't think about anything else but being inside her again, being next to her at the fire, talking all night between having sex. Is it possible, truly possible to be in love with someone after one night? Or is that just the hormones talking?

"Luke! Get your head back on the ice! Where'd you go?"

My teammates notice my distraction. They can see that I'm not into it and my head is somewhere else. It's with her, Sarah Lancaster, a woman I now can't imagine living my life without. I imagine her lips, her breasts, her dark waves and the curves of her body. She's all over my mind and I can't seem to stop it.

Will I see her at the bar again? Maybe around town? Am I supposed to ignore her until 5 years has gone by? I guess she won't be here after graduation, though. She's going to get matched and be somewhere else in the country. I won't see her around at all after that.

I wonder if she's burdened by my secrets. She has to carry it around just as much as I have to live with her knowing. How does that work for her? Maybe she's able to compartmentalize. I know she's pretty fixated on her internship applications. That must be pretty stressful. I'm overcome with thoughts of her body on mine all over again, I know how I'd relieve that stress.

My teammates notice that I'm lost in my own head again. I call for a break so I can clear my head. As I take off my skates and switch them out for sneakers, I see them glaring at me. If I can't win this championship for them, they'll never forgive me.

Sarah was right, we distract each other way too much.

After a walk around the block and back to the rink, my head is clearer and I know what I have to do. I need to put Sarah out of my mind. For five years, I can't think about her at all. Once we have that championship and I have my pick of next steps, then maybe I'll think of her again from time to time. Between this team and my family, I have enough to worry about.

FIVE YEARS LATER

It's August again and I can't help but let Sarah's memory slip into my mind. I think about all that's happened in the past years and I'm struck with the realization that five of them have passed by. I'm nervous thinking about the idea of reconnecting.

I'm a completely different person than I was five years ago when we met. I'm not sure she'll even recognize me. For one, I've traded the athletic gear for suits and ties. The sandy blond waves I used to sport are not clipped close to my head. I wear jewelry when I used to only wear a smart watch with an athletic band.

That season I met Sarah had even my last one on the ice as a starting center. Afterwards, I took over as an assistant coach for the Clovers. Coach Silvers retired two years later and I took his place after that. Now I've been head coach for three years. I oversee recruitment as well. The Clovers are more my team than they were back then.

A lot has happened with my family, too. After Uncle Robbie's death, I began gathering evidence against my father and his other brother, my remaining uncle. It took over a year and a lot of secrets with the FBI but I did it, I exposed him and he's in prison for drug trafficking. Getting Calloway Outdoor Enterprises out of the smuggling trade was another story.

Mostly, I try to concentrate on being head coach. My mother tries to involve me in the family business mode but she has no idea what's really going on. When father went to prison with his brother, the family looked to me for guidance. Behind the scenes of being head coach for the Clovers, I'm head of Calloway Outdoor Enterprises as well.

Every year, we end up with a new team doctor. It's essential to have someone on call in professional hockey. Fights happen often and they cause injuries. A player falls on the ice and it can be worse than when football players get concussions. That ice is rock hard and the impact is like banging into concrete.

None of the team doctors we've had could keep up. As head coach, it's up to me to ensure these players are taken care of and the team doctor is a huge part of that. They have to be top notch. I haven't looked her up since that day on the ice after we were together. I haven't allowed myself to think about her save for this one day in August, the anniversary of that date.

We said we'd wait five years. Today marks the fifth anniversary. Will she come if I call her to be our next team doctor? Did she even become a sports medicine physician? There's only one way to find out. I look her up on social media and it's not difficult to find her. I have plenty of information and her photo is there for anyone to find.

Dr. Sarah Lancaster, M.D. in Cambridge. So she made it to Mass Gen then and got her dream residency. It looks like she's a fellow at the specialty sports medicine program there. Does that mean she can't come here? I send an e-mail to the head of the department.

Dr. Sandstrom,

I'm writing to inquire about your fellow, Dr. Sarah Lancaster. She went to UVM out here in Vermont and we're in need of a new team doctor for the Clovers. If you can spare her, we'd love to have her become part of the Clovers family.

Please respond at your earliest convenience to confer about compensation and travel arrangements.

Thank you,

Luke Calloway, Head Coach

There, I did my part to reach out. The ball is in her court. Or rather, her supervisor's court. All I can do now is wait.

After a few weeks, I still haven't hear anything from Dr. Sandstrom and I'm considering sending another e-mail to follow up. Maybe he didn't get it. Maybe he's blowing me off. I don't know what to think. Maybe he told Sarah and she doesn't want anything to do with me.

"Coach," one of my players is at my side, "someone's at reception to see you. They said they're the new team doctor."

Oh shit. Is she here? Did she come without any response to my e-mail? That sounds like the Sarah I know. I smile, smooth out my shirt, straighten my tie, and head to reception.

She's there, with her dark waves and all her curves. She still looks amazing. I can see a new confidence radiating out of her. The blue silk blouse she wears tucked into grey linen pants accentuates her light complexion and the rosiness of her cheeks. She has a large duffel over one shoulder and she's looking around at the rink ahead.

When she sees me, her face lights up. I'm dumbfounded. I remember her being beautiful but this is a whole other level. She walks over to me and it's like I don't have any breath left in my chest. She wave as she gets closer. I take in a deep breath, let it out, and wave back.

"Well aren't you a sight, Mr. Big Shot Hockey Coach in the suit and tie?" She smiles and looks me up and down.

"You're looking pretty great yourself, Miss Big Shot Doctor in the blouse." I smile back at her.

"I hear you need a new team doctor."

"Yeah, I e-mailed you supervisor."

"I saw that when I took over his office. He doesn't work there anymore. He retired and my fellowship ended. I took over finding hi replacement before I took a transfer to continue my training."

“Oh, so you’re not at Mass Gen anymore?” My stomach drops. Is she here to leave me again?

“No. I decided to take a new fellowship closer to this great new job opportunity I was offered.”

“What’s this new job?”

“Some big shot hockey coach offered to make me team doctor.”

“Did he now?”

“This guy I met five years ago e-mailed my supervisor out of the blue and I remembered this promise we made to each other.”

“I can’t seem to recall. Can you tell me more?” A sly smile spreads across my face.

“After a night of mind blowing sex,” she step closer to me, “we decided to concentrate on our careers and see where we stood in five years.”

“Hmm,” I pretend to be thinking about it, “I remember the sex.”

“Luke!”

“To be honest, Sarah, I haven’t thought about you much until I sent that e-mail.”

“You haven’t?” I see her whole face drop.

“I couldn’t let myself think of you. Whenever I did, I spiraled and you’d be all I could think about at all. So I stopped altogether.”

She laughs, “I did exactly the same thing.”

I take a step closer to her, “So are you taking the job?”

“If you’ll have me.”

I reach out and take her waist, “Of course I’ll have you.”

She seps in to my embrace and I kiss her right then and there. I on’t care who sees us. I don’t care about anything besides her being in my arms again. She kisses me back and I fell that warmth spread through my whole body.

We separate and she smiles up at me,

“Like coming home,” she says.

“This isn’t going to be easy,” I tell her, “ a lot’s changed since we first met.”

“A lot has changed for me too, Luke,” she takes my hand at her side, “we’ll figure it out. I’m not letting you slip away again.”

“I wouldn’t dare.”

She smiles up at me and I kiss her again, contemplating how much to tell her and when to let it out. She accepted me before. This time, there’s a lot more to get past. Either way, I have her with me and I won’t let the dark secrets of my life push her away again.

About the Author

My name is Mary Jennings.

I am a 34-year-old contemporary romance author living in upstate New York with my cat Pippa in our small cottage home.

Born and raised in upstate New York I realized at a young age that I loved fiction writing and sharing my stories with others.

This love turned into a passion of writing romance and a curiosity for traveling the world and experiencing everything life has to offer.

Now I spend most of my days writing new romance novels for others to enjoy. I hope to entertain you with my stories as much as I had fun making them!

I love all my readers dearly and I am thankful every day for those who get enjoyment and entertainment my books.

With Love,

Mary Jennings

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